

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION





Liberal Democrats now lead Durham Council after a century of Labour control

Liberal Democrat run Hinckley and Bosworth Council have been investing in electric charging points in their car parks



Litter clearing in Merton

Cover: One of the county councils that is now under Liberal Democrat leadership is Cambridgeshire

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www.libdemgroup.lga.gov.uk/lga-lib-dem-group

A message from the Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group

Your Liberal Democrat team at the LGA has been working hard throughout this difficult period supporting our councillors up and down the country, from bringing together group leaders for our fortnightly Zoom calls to providing tailored support to those finding themselves in administration and of course the fantastic work of our LGA board members speaking on your behalf on specific policy areas.



This report highlights the work we have been doing over the past year on your behalf. It is a real privilege to represent you. I would like to also take this chance to thank you for your hard work over the last year on behalf of your communities and councils.

COVID-19 and council finances

As elected officials in local government, we know the important role councillors and councils play in supporting our residents in normal times, but perhaps never before has the importance of that role been so clear as it has over the last 18 months. We have been on the frontline in providing essential support throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic and will continue to be at the frontline over the coming months and years of recovery.

In many ways, the difficulties of 2020 have been repeated throughout 2021. We continue to suffer the indecisiveness of national government, face the challenge of stretched council finances, all the while providing support to the people and industries hit hardest by the both disease and indeed the fall-out from our nations response to the disease.

Council funding continues to be one of my top priorities, and we have been working hard to convince government to help plug the £5.3 billion gap in council finances. This of course includes tackling funding pressure on social care, which as Liberal Democrats know, requires a more long-term plan than the government is willing to provide.

The LGA called for an increase of £10 billion per year ahead of the October Comprehensive Spending Review, not just to help plug the gap, but also to meet growing demand and improve services.

With difficult times ahead this funding would have provided councils with the resource they need to better support communities across the country, particularly the most vulnerable in society. It is a great shame that the Chancellor could not see that.

Liberal Democrat councillors and their teams of activists have really led the way throughout the pandemic. You have all gone above and beyond in the most difficult of circumstances. Over the coming months, your communities will continue to rely on your support, and we will continue to fight for the funding that will make your job easier, and the lives of the people you represent better.

Elections 2021

On May 6 this year there were many who suggested that a good election night for our Party would be measured by how few colleagues we lost. I am so happy that we bucked the expectations and saw net gains again across the country, both in terms of councils and councillors.

Special mention must of course be given to the three county councils now led by women Liberal Democrat council leaders. We have ended a combined 48 years of Tory rule in Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire, and 102 years of Labour rule in County Durham. Huge congratulations to Councillor Liz Leffman, Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, and Councillor Amanda Hopgood. And a big shout out to Councillor Chris White and colleagues for taking majority control of St Albans City and District Council.

Congratulations too, and commiserations where necessary, to everyone who stood in this year's blockbuster elections. This was the toughest set of elections many of us have ever faced. We were up against a Tory party riding high in the polls as a result of constant media exposure and a successful vaccine programme, and of course the additional challenge of being unable to campaign properly throughout lockdown, which the Conservatives took full advantage of.

From these elections we know that we must develop our campaigning response to tackle the rising threat of both the Green Party and localist parties, as well as a Conservative Party that appears clearly willing to, in my view, 'flex the rules' to further their electoral success.

Supporting our campaigning councillors

Under my Leadership we have further extended and built on the close working we do with ALDC to support campaigning Liberal Democrat councillors.

ALDC chief executive, Tim Pickstone, attends our regular Executive meetings and the LGA Liberal Democrat group is a significant sponsor of the Councillors Weekend and other events to support councillors.

Keeping in touch

We continue to have fortnightly zoom calls for Council leaders/deputies and for our opposition group leaders, chaired by Ruth Dombey and Alan Connett respectively. I join as often as possible. The conclusions of these calls have fed into my regular meetings with other senior political leaders here at the LGA and with government ministers.

In addition to meeting with other group leaders here at the LGA I hold regular meetings with Tim Farron MP as Local Government Spokesperson in the commons and Baroness Kath Pinnock our Lords Spokesperson, Tim Pickstone and Prue Bray – as Chief Executive and Chair of ALDC; Mark Pack as Liberal Democrat President, Ed Davey as Leader and Mike Dixon as the party's Chief Executive.

The team in the LGA office attend regular cluster meetings with spokespeople in the Commons, Lords, and the Welsh and Scottish Parliament, championing local government challenges and successes within specific briefs.

I would like to use this opportunity to say a big thank you to Terry, Rob, Amy (who in the year moved to a new post in the LGA) and our new member of staff, Ryan, for all their work over the last year. We have continued to get an excellent service from the team in very difficult circumstances.

Lastly, I would like to say a big thank to all those that have served on LGA boards and committees over the last year, especially those that are retiring and not standing again or coming to the end of their term of office, I would like to put on record my personal thanks to Councillor Ruth Dombey who has served as my deputy for the last four years, who is stepping down from her role in advance of the London 2022 local elections, thank you Ruth.

Remember, we are here to represent you! So do not hesitate to get in touch with me and the team with any issues you are facing in your authority, and any success stories that should be shared more widely. And please do come along to our zoom meetings, it is always great to see a new face on those calls.

And finally, let's continue the campaigning that is helping us break through again. We now have more than 2450 councillors across England and Wales, that is more than 780 than we had in 2017 when I became your LGA Group Leader.

The challenge to us all is to keep campaigning, stand everywhere and get even more Liberal Democrat councillors elected and serving local communities.

The 2021 political balance of the LGA

As a cross-party membership organisation, the LGA's governance is determined by the strength of its four political groups. Following the local elections each year, Plymouth University's Elections Centre calculates the proportionality figures using a formula that takes account of the number of council seats held by each group and the population and type of authority that they represent.

CON	39.9%
LAB	35.8%
LIB DEM	12.5%
IND	11.9%

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group's representation strengthened slightly in 2021, gaining a Vice Chair on a Board. No group has majority control of the LGA.

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leadership Team, Executive and Board places 2019-2021



Howard Sykes
Group Leader (and LGA Vice Chair)
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Heather Kidd
Group Chair Councillor
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Councillor Ruth Dombey OBE
Deputy Group Leader
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Councillor Alan Connett
Group Whip
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LGA Liberal Democrat Board members 2019-2021

LGA Boards cover all areas of a local authority's remit and provides guidance to the LGA as it represents local government at Westminster and advises councils around the country. Those elected members who served from 2019-2021 were as follows:

(Note: Those marked with an asterix (*) are also members of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Executive alongside the Group Leadership team)

Children and Young People

Lucy Nethsingha*

Cambridgeshire (lead from 01/03/2020)
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Mark Cory

Colchester (Lead until 01/03/2020)
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Nick Cott

Newcastle (sub from 01/03/2020)
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Community Wellbeing

Richard Kemp*

Liverpool (Lead)
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Doreen Huddart

Newcastle
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Rob Rotchell

Cornwall (sub)
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Culture Tourism and Sport

Gerald Vernon-Jackson*

Portsmouth (Lead)
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Chris White

St Albans and Hertfordshire
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Chris Hogg

Cumbria (Sub)
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Environment Economy Housing and Transport

Adele Morris*

Southwark (Lead)
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Peter Thornton

South Lakeland & Cumbria
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Stewart Golton

Leeds City (Sub)
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Improvement and Innovation

Liz Green*

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Caroline Leaver

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Resources

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Adam Paynter

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Mike Bell

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Safer Communities

Bridget Smith*

South Cambridgeshire (Lead)
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Jeremy Hilton

Gloucestershire
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Jon Ball

Ealing (Sub)
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City Regions

Anita Lower*

Newcastle (Lead)
anita.lower@gmail.com

Gareth Roberts

Richmond
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Roger Helmer

Birmingham
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People and Places

Heather Kidd*

Shropshire (Lead)
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Sarah Osborne

East Sussex
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Stan Collins

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Alan Knox

Ribble Valley (sub)
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Fire Services

Keith Aspden*

York (Lead)
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Carolyn Lambert

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Roger Price

Hampshire (Sub)
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District Councils Network

Bridget Smith*

South Cambridgeshire (Lead)
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County Councils Network

Jerry Roodhouse*

Warwickshire and Rugby
jerryroodhouse@warwickshire.gov.uk

Policy Co-ordinator and LGA Brexit working group rep

Chris White*

Hertfordshire and St Albans
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Federal Policy Committee rep

Peter Thornton*

Cumbria
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LGA Properties Board and Audit lead

David Neighbour*

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Children and Young People Board

Councillor Lucy Nethsingha



2020/21 has been an extraordinary year for the CYP Board, as for every other area of life. There have been a huge number of issues in education, brought on by the pandemic, and I have worked on many of these with Lib Dem colleagues. We work with Daisy

Cooper and the Lib Dem Parliamentary team.

Free school meals

This has been a huge issue since the start of the pandemic and remains so. Daisy Cooper and I worked on this last year, and have continued to work with others, including councillors across the country to campaign for free school meal provision for all those not in school, whether due to lockdowns, isolation or “normal” school holidays. Food poverty remains a huge issue for the poorest families, and has a dreadful impact on the young people who are not being properly fed.

Exams and missing education

Summer of 2020 saw total chaos in the exam system, with Gavin Williamson totally failing to manage GCSE or A level results effectively. I worked closely with Daisy Cooper and the parliamentary team to respond to that situation.

Students

The Autumn saw the chaotic return of students to universities, again with little or no support from government, and with dire consequences for some. Again, I have been working with Daisy and the Parliamentary team to make sure this was raised in parliament. Many students have lost out hugely this year, and many have been charged huge amounts for

courses and accommodation which they have barely been able to use or access.

SEND funding

This is the biggest issue facing local authorities, both before the pandemic, and now after. The situation for many local authorities is dire, with huge, and rising deficits, and no sensible response from government over how such deficits are to be funded. This will be a critical issue for the CYP Board in the coming year and is an area where the LGA needs to be preparing a major campaign.

Children’s social care

The pandemic has seen fewer referrals to children’s social care than normal. Given the previous pressure on the system this has been a small relief, BUT the big concern is that there are a lot of children out in the community who may have been missed as they have not been seen by teachers or other professionals. Many authorities are expecting a bulge of referrals this coming year, as children who were missed present with possibly bigger issues than would have been the case if they had been picked up earlier.

Unaccompanied Asylum seeker children (UASC)

This issue remains a big one in some parts of the country, most obviously the south coast, with Kent taking the government to court and refusing to take more children. Myself, along with the LGA have been supportive of the need for the care of UASC to be shared out more widely across the country, but the government have so far not acted to enforce this.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

LGA Liberal Democrat Group Whip

Councillor Alan Connett



Standards remain an issue

Last year I wrote that 'the dark cloud of a Standards complaint continues to be allowed to hang over a councillor's head without time limit on a resolution being achieved'.

Over the year, I have supported several colleagues who have 'experienced' the Standards processes, and from my vantage point it remains a mixed-experience for councillors.

Once a complaint is found to have merit for investigation, it can take an absolute age to investigate and conclude. The sector says it wants to support the mental health and wellbeing of councillors. While the sanctions may, currently, be limited, we should recognise the impact a complaint can have on a councillor.

Reports and attendance

A summary of attendance of board members is included within this report.

I remind all colleagues of the need to attend their board and panel meetings and if they are not able to, for whatever reason, they MUST ensure they arrange for the substitute to attend

In the past year, colleagues have been diligent in submitting their reports on time and where they were late, it was with good reason and accepted. As we know in our council work, it is not length of a report that matters, but is conciseness and ability to convey an issue.

To this end, the 'report template' continues to work well and allows us to feed into the campaigning ideas and briefs via the 'all councillor' email and the ALDC campaigner email.

And finally

Thank you to Terry Stacy, Rob Banks and Ryan Priest in the Group Office for their help and support and also to the Executive Team of Councillor Howard Sykes, Group Leader, Councillor Ruth Dombey, Deputy Leader, and Councillor Heather Kidd, Chair. I am also grateful to all of my colleagues on the Boards and Panels for their support.

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Record of attendance 2020-2021

Executive member	10/09/2020	22/10/2020	22/10/2020	03/12/2020	21/01/2021	11/03/2021	10/06/2021
Howard Sykes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ruth Dombey	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Heather Kidd	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Alan Connett	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lucy Nethsingha	Apologies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apologies	Y
Richard Kemp	Y	Y	Apologies	Apologies	Y	Y	Y
Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Y	Y	Y (Apols for lateness)	Apologies (late)	Y	Apologies (late)	Apologies (late)
Adele Morris	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apologies	Y
Liz Green	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Keith House	Y	Y	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	Y
Bridget Smith	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Anita Lower	Apologies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apologies
Heather Kidd	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Keith Aspden	Apologies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dave Neighbour	Apologies	Y	Y	N	Apologies	Apologies	Y
Sara Bedford/Bridget Smith (after July 2020)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chris White	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jerry Roodhouse	Y	Apologies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Peter Thornton	Y	Y	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	Y	Y

Reports received

Lead member	16/07/2020	10/09/2020	31/10/2020	03/12/2020	21/01/2021	11/03/2021	10/06/2021
Howard Sykes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ruth Dombey	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Heather Kidd	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Alan Connett	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lucy Nethsingha	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Richard Kemp	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Y	N	Y	Y	Late tabled*	Y	Y
Adele Morris	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Liz Green	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Keith House	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Late tabled*
Bridget Smith	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Anita Lower	Y	N	Y	Late tabled*	Y	Y	Late tabled*
Heather Kidd	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Late tabled*	Y
Keith Aspden	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Late tabled*
Dave Neighbour	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Jerry Roodhouse	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sara Bedford (07/20)/ Bridget Smith (09/20 onwards) (DCN)	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Chris White	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Community Wellbeing Board

Councillor Richard Kemp



As I have reviewed my last five Annual Reports to the LGA three topics seem to have been included in every one of them.

Social care

Almost my first meeting when elected to the CWB as Deputy Chair was with staff

from the DoH, as it then was called, talking about the proposed Green or White Paper on social care; nothing much has happened since then! There were ten words about social care in the Queens Speech. We were told by Johnson that he was ready to go on reforms after his election success in 2019. However, that is clearly not the case. The big stumbling block is clearly how to pay for it. We should also be aware that sorting out the funding of the elderly is only part of the problem and a diminishing part.

I have continually raised with ministers that increasing an unfair and discriminatory tax like Council Tax cannot be used as a substitute for legislative action and a coherent financial framework.

Simply put a large number of working age adults are now being supported by social care for the whole of their lives which can be for the whole of their lives with longevity beginning to reach the levels for those without care needs.

I am pleased to be a part of the Lib Dem Carers Commission set up by Ed Davey which is aiming to assist the 9 million+ people who provide paid or voluntary care, in some cases for the whole of their lives.

We must start making the general public aware of the issues here.

NHS reform

Five years ago we started the process within the NHS of creating STPs which became ISCs! Legislation will soon be introduced to convert those bodies into statutory and accountable bodies. We have now had confirmed what we have known for the past year that a major reform to the NHS is to be carried out. This will start from next April/May but the NHS is already gearing up for the changes; moving staff and budgets about etc; on the basis that the legislation will be passed. This means that legislation must be proposed. Unless they start before the summer recess this will be an almost impossible timetable.

The legislation is not as bad as the Bill that was dropped prior to the 2019 General Election. There are a number of opportunities for council involvement both now and as the new structures are introduced. The Government have recognised the huge role that Councils play in health and especially in keeping people well through our actions on the social determinants of health.

We all need to be in full knowledge of the changes that are happening and to ask in our localities questions such as these:

- How is your council being involved in the reshaping of governance at the ISC/STP level?
- What sub-regional relations are being established or confirmed at sub-regional level to ensure the proper formulation of plans for local delivery and the scrutiny of them?
- How will your public health functions fit into the wider NHS plans?

Public health

The Government has confirmed that there are no proposals to alter our work in this field and in fact there may well be opportunities for councils to increase their activities. Public Health England will

disappear next year and be replaced by two bodies. The Health Security Agency, looking after pandemic and resilience issues; and the Health Improvement Agency, looking at a range of ill health prevention issues.

Questions to ask:

- What is the impact on services such as obesity, alcohol and drugs misuse programmes like to be?
- Are the budgets for these services guaranteed?
- Are there opportunities to expand work within the new NHS structures?
- What can the Council do with a range of partners to cost-effectively ramp up services and activities to enhance illness prevention.

COVID-19

Of course, on top of these regular items COVID-19 has been overlaid and it has affected anything and everything connected with social care and health. The aftermath of the pandemic gives us many opportunities to take advantage of changed sentiments toward the work that we do. Both the public and Government have realised the importance of the localist approach and the work that can best be done by councillors and their councils in delivering services, contacts and leadership in troubled times.

As always times of change can be seen as either a threat or a challenge. I believe that if we take the latter approach, we can move proactive services forward to a point where councils can both control more and influence more.

This is my last report to you in this role. I hope that I have been able to help deliver the threefold objectives of taking liberalism into the LGA; local government into the National and Parliamentary Party and bringing the national stuff to you.

Whatever I have done has only been possible because of the first-class staff in the LGA Lib Dem Group Office; the LGA health and social care team and the support given to me by Lib Dem Councillors with health responsibilities within their council.

My best wishes to my successor. I'm around to help if needed!!

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson



The main and obvious issue has been the COVID pandemic and the effect this has had on councils across the country.

Arts and culture

The Government took steps to work with the

Arts Council to put in place the Cultural Recovery Fund. This has £1.57 billion and has saved many institutions from going bust. But there are still very significant problems. Many arts and cultural groups have had to run down their reserves to survive. These have been saved up for specific projects (like major repairs) and they have now gone. Many freelancers work in the arts, and many Government support programmes have failed to safeguard them.

Theatres

There are around 1100 theatres in the country –116 are run by councils and around 550 receive council funding. We are not sure how many of these will survive, but the chances are that regional theatre may be hit really badly.

Council budgets have been badly squeezed by the pandemic, and Government have failed to fund many councils properly. Councils across the country will have to look at balancing the books and this may well lead to additional cuts in non-statutory services like culture, arts and sport.

Sports services are also facing serious problems. The Government failed to fund councils to be able to pay Leisure Trusts to keep going. Many leisure trusts have come forward to ask for additional support from councils. The highest sum I know being asked for is an additional £12m from one council.

The LGA successfully pushed the Government to find an additional £100m for councils for this.

There is a real prospect of councils closing swimming pools and leisure centres in the next few years as so many of them are coming to the end of their useful lives. The LGA has approached the Government and asked for additional funding for this, but so far we have not succeeded.

Tourism is in a very bad way. The Government has launched a review of DMO (Destination Marketing Organisations) as there is no countrywide approach. We have inputted into this.

Local Government puts around £1 billion into culture and the arts annually. The Arts Council just over £500m. We also put around £1 billion into sports and open spaces. In the last three and a half years as Chair of the Culture, Tourism and Sports Board I have yet to have a meeting with the Secretary of State as DCMS do not seem to view Local Government as a strategic partner. The Members of the board all work very well in a cross-party manner. We have all agreed to put pressure on the Minister, which led to a meeting in June 2021.

I've spoken at many conferences and webinars on behalf of the LGA. On some of them I've known about the subject, some less so (dental NHS contracts).

My thanks for very able support from Chris White, we would all expect nothing less from someone who knows so much. Many thanks Chris.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

Councillor Adele Morris



This has been another busy year for the EEHT board. We have held our board meetings online and run well attended webinars on a range of topics. Planning, housing and the environment continued to dominate our agendas.

2020 saw two major planning consultations – one proposing changes to the current planning system, the other proposing radical reform through the Planning White Paper.

They raised concerns across the country and the board held a separate meeting to discuss them with the minister. Both the LGA and I made robust responses to the consultations. The Government decided not to proceed with some of the proposals, however the Queen's Speech has confirmed that there will be a radical overhaul of our planning system in the next few years. To support our Lib Dem councillors, we ran two sessions on local plans, and one on housing algorithms, land supply and the housing delivery test.

Also announced in the Queen's Speech was the reintroduction of the long-awaited Environment Bill, although there are concerns that the Planning White Paper could undermine some of its proposals, especially in relation to biodiversity net gain and carbon net zero development. I continue to attend the weekly meetings with the Lib Dem Spokesperson for Climate Emergency and Energy and environment lead members to discuss a range of topics related to climate change. We have had presentations from external speakers, and our other Lib Dem MPs have been joining to discuss how their

respective portfolios will be incorporating climate change, particularly in relation to COP26 later this year.

The Building Safety Bill is welcomed however, there remains concern with the slowness of action since the tragic Grenfell fire and the burden of remediation costs on leaseholders.

The Government has just re-consulted on a number of waste initiatives that were previously proposed in the Resources and Waste Strategy. The LGA has again run a session with councils to discuss the proposals, and we had a separate EEHT board meeting to discuss our response to the consultation. Whilst an improved waste collection system is welcomed the main concern is applying something standardised across all councils when they have different logistical challenges or existing long-term contracts, along with adequate funding.

The pandemic exposed just how many people were sleeping rough, in temporary/unsuitable accommodation or struggling to pay their rent and we have concerns about the impact on homelessness from lifting the eviction ban. The LGA has produced "A councillor's guide to leading the homelessness sector." In January, Peter Thornton and I ran a session with senior Lib Dem councillors on housing, where we discussed pressing issues and shared best practice.

LGA transport webinars this year included discussions on decarbonisation of transport, low traffic neighbourhoods and the national bus strategy (Bus Back Better). Both the LGA and the Planning Advisory Service websites have fantastic online resources for councillors, and both regularly run free events and webinars which I would highly recommend. They are also always looking for best practice examples from councils so make sure you tell them about the great work you are doing.

This is my last year on the EEHT board, and I've enjoyed my time immensely. I'd like to thank fellow board member Peter Thornton, the staff in the LGA Lib Dem office and the policy teams at the LGA for all the support they have given me over the last six years.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Improvement and Innovation Board

Councillor Liz Green



The LGA officers, overseen by the Improvement and Innovation Board, quickly adapted the sector-led improvement offer at the outbreak of the pandemic.

The corporate peer challenges could not

continue as was, so remotely accessed Recovery and Renewal Panel and Bespoke Peer Support were started. All the leadership essential training moved online, to continue to offer support to councillors and the LGA introduced a one to one coaching offer for leading members.

Other initiatives such as the Rough Sleeping Peer support, COVID enquiries line, Councillor's role in COVID workbooks and remote council, meetings hub were all well received by councils, with every council engaging in some of the offer. The LGA virtual conference in July 2020 was well attended and with other virtual events throughout the year, over 10,000 local government officers and councillors have attended, an increase of 600 per cent on previous years.

In total, 13 COVID related reports/workbooks were produced by the LGA, which were viewed a total of 1.6m times during the year; 98 per cent of councils are now signed up to LG Inform for data analytics; over 7000 applicants for the National Graduate Development Programme and direct support was delivered to 55 councils facing severe financial challenges.

On climate change, the LGA is now engaging with 90 per cent of English and Welsh councils, with a variety of tools and resources: Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool which has been downloaded by 180 Councils; Net Zero Innovation Programme paired up 12 Councils with Universities; three Leadership

Essential courses in 20/21 with 75 attendees; Councillors Workbook on Local Pathway to Net Zero and a Behavioural Change and the Environment Guide.

With COP 26 in Glasgow this November, there is a lot of focus on climate action within the LGA. I am working, as chair of the sector led improvement climate change working group, with the EEHT board and the newly formed Climate Change Task Force with group leaders. There will be a series of events, podcasts, guides and activities over the course of this year – all aimed at helping Councillors and Councils with their local actions on climate change. Climate action is now also listed in the Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG.

At the start of 2021, it was looking like the grant from the Government for sector led improvement would be drastically reduced from previous years, but through negotiations there is only a relatively small reduction. The board is looking at the lessons from COVID response, such as increased webinars and remote learning opportunities, whilst being clear that some work, like the corporate peer challenge and Leadership Academy, are better returning to face-to-face.

I also took on the equalities role for the board during this year. I am looking at getting more analysis across the protected characteristics for all services of the board, but particularly for learning opportunities. Traditionally we have data for gender, race and age but look less at equal access for those with disabilities or caring responsibilities.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Resources Board

Councillor Keith House



The Resources Board leads for the LGA on a range of financial issues for local government: pay, terms and conditions, workforce, welfare reform and EU funding. Back in the world before March 2020, we all anticipated a year that

would be dominated by the Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Reform and changes to welfare – almost all of which remains delayed or not started. This will be an area of heavy workload for the remainder of the year.

The majority of the Board's business over the year have been in reaction to COVID-19. That's been about securing more finance from government and considering issues around recovery. Substantial funding from government has not addressed the range of areas where local government remains uncompensated for the cost of COVID, with huge variations across different types of authorities with differing needs.

The gap is alarming, and disproportionately affects social care authorities and those with major losses of income from tourism, parking and commercial activity. There is much work to do. Staying united as a sector is vital. Divisions in local government will see government picking winners and pushing its own agenda, not least as the ongoing effects of austerity and demographic change are still seeing ongoing need for substantial cuts where no new income can be achieved.

The Board started work on a major piece of work on future local government funding. This is continuing in the background to respond to future business rate and spending reviews, as is work on the challenges arising from the implementation of Universal Credit.

In the meantime, ongoing pay negotiations have resulted in an Employers' offer of 1.5 per cent being rejected by unions. As employers, affordability has been the key issue while at the same time wishing to make a fair proposal in line with other areas in the public sector. The Board has responded to a range of consultations, including the future of audit where changes to audit requirements and a more probing "going concern" regime, combined with the lack of availability of qualified audit partners, has resulted in a substantial number of delayed audits.

Finally, to record my thanks to Adam Paynter, and to our team at the LGA in Smith Square (and now at home!), who have given me fulsome support on the Board in a year of rapid change.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Councillor Bridget Smith



Despite the pandemic it has been a very busy year at the SSCB with a varied programme of issues to deal with. Some have been one offs, such as the age of criminal responsibility and others have run the whole way through the year and beyond.

Building Safety, post Grenfell Towers, has been the really big- ticket item with really excellent reports produced by the lead LGA officer. The sad fact is that absolutely no one comes out of the enquiry well but where the buck will eventually stop is not yet clear. Kingspan PLC is now known to have lied but the slowness of the remediation work, the inadequacy of the government funding and the seemingly endless suffering of the victims of this tragedy make this a very complex and harrowing matter. There is a big emerging issue of unsafe buildings which are just below the 18m required for eligibility for government grants and a parallel issue about there being no money to remediate issues other than cladding such as combustable balconies. The burden that can potentially fall on leaseholders for all of the remediation costs is only now coming to light and even if people are able to access loans this inevitably impacts on the value and saleability of their homes.

The new Protect Duty has potential to be quite a burden to councils with their licensing and enforcement roles as it covers a very wide range of venues and spaces that the 'public have access to' and which may therefore be attractive to terrorist attacks.

The 18-week consultation ends in summer. The responsibility rests with the owners and operators of venues and public spaces but this gets very complex when there are no clear owners, such as beaches, or multiple owners such as town centres.

The SSCB has regular briefings on Serious Violent Crime Duty which regrettably affects us all these days though for some areas it is a much bigger issue. The Police and Crime Bill made provision for a public health approach to tackling serious violence crime. This means adopting the world health organisation approach which is fundamentally about working in partnership. The aim is for a substantial reduction in deaths and hospital admissions. We have to self-monitor for success which requires data sharing powers. The duty lies with both levels of LAs where they exist.

COVID has of course taken up quite a lot of our agendas with changes to licensing, enforcement and policing featuring quite often. We had an extraordinary briefing on conspiracy theorists which actually played to both the terrorism/serious crime and COVID issues. If we think this is a problem just in the USA then we could not be more wrong and we should not underestimate how organised and potentially harmful it is.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Fire Service Management Committee and Fire Commission

Councillor Keith Aspden



It has been another busy year for the LGA Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) and Fire Commission! I would like to thank all those that have been involved with fire service issues this year. My thanks go to Councillor Carolyn

Lambert, my colleague on FSMC, and to Councillor Roger Price, our substitute member, who regularly attends, alongside all Lib Dem members of the Fire Commission.

During this year we have:

- Continued to lobby against unwanted 'take overs' from Police and Crime Commissioners of Fire and Rescue Authorities, including supporting affected fire services with professional advice.
- Made building safety one of our key priorities, responding to the Fire Safety Bill and Grenfell Tower tragedy, including through the Hackitt Review.
- As LGA Liberal Democrats we campaigned to End the Cladding Scandal.
- Engaged with the Fire and Building Safety Minister and Senior Sector Group with the Home Office, in order to respond for the fire sector to spending reviews, the national fire inspection report and push for resources to match responsibilities.
- The national fire inspection report has focused our recent work on culture and diversity in the fire services, fire services pay (the National Joint Council), chief fire officer operational independence and the suggestion of common standards for the

sector. LGA members are actively working with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to respond on these issues, whilst reminding the minister to tackle the big areas for improvement (culture, professionalism and funding), that will improve services, rather than get distracted on governance.

- Hundreds of councillors, including an active Lib Dem Group, attended the first virtual LGA Fire Conference. I chaired the conference seminar on how fire services are responding to the climate emergency.
- We have launched a best practice guide to fire services tackling the climate emergency, from responding to flooding to suggestions for what more fire authorities can do.
- Held the Fire Conference, FSMC and Fire Commission meetings virtually.
- I have sent occasional E-Bulletins for Lib Dem fire spokespersons and held group meetings for our team of Fire Commission members. This had included continued advice on how to turn fire service issues into local and national campaigns.

As we approach 2022, our priorities as Liberal Democrats and at the LGA will focus on implementation following the national reviews of governance, fire safety and the national fire inspection. This must rightly include culture, professionalism, funding and workforce issues. We will also continue to campaign for local areas to be able to retain their decision making and for greater funding and action on building safety and cladding. I would welcome any input or questions on these priorities that councillors have.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

City Regions Board

Councillor Anita Lower



Devolution

The Devolution APPG launched a report in March and the board published research showing 58 per cent of MPs and 80 per cent of peers agree that councils should be given greater powers and funding to drive employment and

training schemes in their areas.

The board also fed into the House of Lords Public Services Committee report on Levelling Up and the Treasury Select Committee's inquiry into jobs, growth and productivity after coronavirus.

As the Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper has been superseded by a Levelling Up White Paper, the board is considering how to ensure that the sector's devolution priorities and the opportunities for urban areas can best be included within this new agenda.

Urban Issues

Work to explore the additional cost pressures facing urban areas was completed and the final report, drawing on the experiences of councils tackling housing and homelessness was sent to the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government. On behalf of the board I gave evidence to a parliamentary select committee on the outcome of the research.

The board commissioned work looking at the impact of COVID-19 on urban areas with the aim of setting out a vision for urban growth and recovery following the pandemic. The report, due to be published this summer, recommends the creation of a Sustainable Urban Futures Fund to provide long-term, large scale funding for integrated urban programmes.

Local growth

The board, along with the People and Places Board, commissioned research into the lessons learned from the Local Industrial Strategy trailblazer and the implications for other areas developing local economic strategies. This is available on the LGA's Local Industrial Strategies Hub. Or if you are looking at the paper copy try here www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-online-hub/local-growth/local-industrial-strategies-online-hub

Employment and skills

The board brought together Whitehall leads with council areas to shape Plan for Jobs related activity, and ran a workshop with the National Audit Office on its inquiry into the workings of DWP during COVID-19.

The board launched a new local employment and skills recovery learning hub or here www.local.gov.uk/employment-skills-recovery-hub which contains five themes to boost local jobs and skills' and thirteen case studies highlighting practical local government action to coordinate jobs and skills during the pandemic, and published a report capturing action learning to support local authorities to identify barriers and challenges in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people.

The board responded to the DfE's flexi-apprenticeship consultation, the House of Lords Youth Unemployment Committee's inquiry into measures taken to protect and create jobs for young people and briefed for a Westminster Hall debate on the Education Committee's report on adult skills and lifelong learning. Work continues on the implications of Government's Adult Education Budget funding rule change on councils' adult and community learning provision.

EU Funding/UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Following the launch of the UK Community Renewal Fund prospectus, the board is working with lead authorities on the CRF process to identify learning that might be made available for the design of the forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Freeports

The board called on Government to ensure that Freeports create new jobs and opportunities for local people, consider the risk of economic displacement of UK domestic businesses, and consider how it can best work with the unsuccessful areas as part of its wider ambition to 'level up' the country.

Looking ahead

In the next year, the board will continue to lobby Government to put councils at the heart of its Levelling Up agenda and ensure that economic recovery plans account for the interests and challenges of urban areas.

It will take forward the LGA's lobbying work on skills, making the case for the Work Local model, seek feedback on the UK Community Renewal Fund process to help the development of the design of the forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and ensure that councils play a key role in managing growth funding through the Levelling Up Fund and UKSPF.

I would like to thank my fellow Cities Board member Councillor Gareth Roberts, LB Richmond Upon Thames and our board sub Councillor Roger Harmer, Birmingham CC for their support and friendship during the last year. And lastly a big shout out the office staff for all their support and advice over the last year, thank you!

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

People and Places Board

Councillor Heather Kidd



The Lib Dem group on the People and Places Board has three members:

Councillor Sarah Osborne – East Sussex County Council – has continued to work on rural transport issues especially

around home to school transport for 16-18-year olds. She also represents us on the Rural Digital Connectivity working group, but this has been dormant recently.

Councillor Stan Collins from Cumbria who works hard on highways issues, broadband and other infrastructure.

Councillor Alan Knox has regularly attended pre-meetings and as an observer as a substitute.

This year also saw a maternity cover by Sonika Sidhu who came in knowing little about rural issues but really worked hard to get to grips with it. She came in with fresh eyes and COVID-19 and lock down have curtailed many functions for a while. The Board meetings and Lead member meetings have continued now via Zoom.

Group Zoom meetings are also now set up and we have been successful in also having Baroness Cathy Bakewell join us.

COVID issues being raised with the Lib Dem team include:

- access to training learning and skills covering broadband and mobile coverage and rural transport in the COVID recovery period
- rural tourism and COVID impact
- impact of COVID on Agriculture, rights of way, milk and meat prices etc. Countryside Code.
- people moving out of towns and cities to work from home putting even greater pressure on house prices and rental rates. house price pressures.

Major issues for the board continue to be:

- Broadband and mobile phone signal.
- Food, farming and the Environment and a green rural Brexit. Post Brexit England Commission report. This will be presented at the LGA Conference this July.
- Skills and employment – updated for COVID and the recovery period. Access being a major issue we have raised consistently. Much of this work has been joint with the City Regions Board and I thank Anita Lower (Lead Member for City Regions) for her work on this.
- Devolution – where Local Government re-organisation seems now to be taking a back seat (except for those already progressing). This whole area has now shifted towards the 'Levelling up' agenda.
- The most important piece of work carried out this year or for many years is a truly rural and coastal piece of work and does credit to the Board. It deserves a heading of its own. I took part in round table discussions, one to one interviews and several reviews of this work. See details below.

Rural Recognition, Recovery, Resilience and Revitalisation project carried out by Pragmatix advisory

They say:

Rural and coastal communities have specific challenges that policymakers must recognise.

They go on to provide data on significant areas affecting Rural and Coastal area.

Rural and coastal challenges include:

- increase in homeworking
- poor broadband speeds
- more direct communication needed with smallest businesses

- fewer opportunities for business networking
- lack of footfall in town and village centres
- fragmented local services each struggling for viability
- affordable housing
- mental health issues.
- low HE uptake
- high costs and poor connectivity of transport links to college
- lincreasing demand for niche skills
- need for understanding of new technology and equipment
- lack of specialist courses available locally

They also include some possible solutions. Look out for this work when it is published by the LGA. There is plenty to campaign on in this document.

Other work

I have also an active member of the ALDC Management committee. I have continually argued for rural campaigns. "Peace time Focus" and communications for rural wards is now vital and I have been pressing for this again this year. I continue to mentor at Kickstart to help elect more Lib Dem councillors.

I continue to peer mentor.

I would like to thank my Lib Dem team and the Liberal Democrat office for their support during the six years I have been the lead member. At least I can now leave the Board having seen a real piece of rural work!

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Liberal Democrat Retained Peers Report

Councillor Alan Connett



Not another Zoom meeting....

There was a time when we all wondered why, on earth, we could not hold some meetings remotely to save the travel, time and inconvenience.

If there is anything positive to come from the pandemic, it is the rapid change all councillors and councils have had to make as we adopted new ways of working, but found they too brought new perils.

So, while 18 months or so ago, the idea of a routine 'virtual meeting' dealing with real business and getting things done seemed a bit 'Star Trek', it is interesting that the sector went a bit 'Star Wars' and took legal action to be able to continue meeting virtually.

In my view, the changes are only just beginning and, in time, the ways we work as councillors will change and adapt and yes, I do think virtual meetings will be back.

Your team of Retained Peers, Councillor Alan Connett, Councillor Sarah Butikofer and Councillor Lisa Smart, work to support our Council Groups, Leaders and individual councillors across the country.

The LGA's Highlighting Leadership programme is particularly valuable to all councillors, whether it is the excellent Leadership Academy or the high-quality Leadership Essentials events.

The LGA investment over many years in Member development is, I suggest, returning a rich dividend to the sector. We need to see more Liberal Democrat councillors taking part. Let me know if you would like more information.

Last year, I reported on the launch of the weekly 'conference calls' for council and group leaders. The 'leaders conferences' have continued and proved both popular and effective. We ran a 'budget special' for opposition leaders which, from reports back, was effective as amendments were put down and changes won in some councils.

Our thanks to the special guests who led on various topics including James Baker (ALDC), Councillor Michael Headley, Bedford Council and Councillor Adele Morris, Southwark Council.

Peer assignments and mentoring

If you are interested in joining the Peer Pool, or would like to recommend a colleague, please get in touch. We particularly welcome expressions of interest from women, BAME, young councillors, councillors with good experience in planning, adult and children's services, finance and housing and social media.

Throughout the year we have provided member peers for a range of assignments including Corporate Peer Challenges, skill related member development, planning and finance support, along with much more.

In addition, with more councils now being Liberal Democrat led or with us in partnership administration, we have been providing more Peer Mentors.

Our Peer Mentors are experienced councillors who have also attended the LGA mentor development event, which is co-delivered with our Group Leader, Howard Sykes.

Help and support throughout the Year

We are a team of three – Cllr Alan Connett, National Lead member Peer, and Regional Lead Members Cllr Lisa Smart and Cllr Sarah Butikofer.

Our support includes, but often extends beyond facilitated events for Groups, future planning for the council, putting that planning into reality, group issues, general advice and arranging mentoring.

We work closely with colleagues at ALDC to support training and development for councillors at Kickstart, for example, and Party conferences.

Thank you

My thanks to Sarah and Lisa, the Group Office and all our member peers for their help and support throughout the year. Also, my thanks to the LGA Principal Advisors and the Improvement Team who have helped so much throughout the year.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

District Councils Network Report

Councillor Bridget Smith



The past 12 months have been pretty crazy at the DCN with the focus principally on COVID as well as the threat of local government reorganisation (LGR) and most recently on this year's elections and how we continue to fulfil our duties in a

COVID safe way. We have had up to two meetings a week at times and have had the pleasure of listening to a never-ending stream of platitudes from government ministers who offer us lots of thanks and very little else. John Fuller, the chair has had a relentlessly uncomfortable time of it with considerable push back from me supported by Giles and Joe and also often from his fellow Conservatives.

Where we have challenged we have consistently got our way. The most notable and significant of these wins was over LGR. John's starting point was that it was inevitable and our role was just to make sure that district councils came out of it as well as possible. Basically, he was not prepared to challenge ministers. We hit him like a steam train on this up to the point at which I am pretty sure he knew his continuation as chair was in jeopardy. To give him his due, once he had understood and capitulated we were able to move forward fast and effectively to commission three excellent independent reports which clearly evidenced that a move to unitaries was very far from being the 'cure all' that government would have us believe. We acknowledged that it may be right for some places, where all partners wanted it, but it was certainly not right for everywhere.

I also succeeded in getting them to outsource their media on this rather than just using the LGA internal comms which I did not view as hard hitting enough to get people interesting in the issue. Most interestingly our research showed that LGR is never supported by communities when they get the chance to voice their opinions – they like their local government to be as local as possible. However, this issue has not gone away and government are pushing on with the three current reorganisations which includes Yorks and Cumbria. Rumour has it that there are a further five earmarked in a second phase including Herts, Warwickshire, Surrey, Kent and Lincolnshire. As things stand now any council can submit a plan and there is no requirement for consensus so it could be foisted on a council against their will if it is the will of the Sec of State. This is contrary to the case for Combined Authorities where all partners have to agree. So even though we have won a small battle there are still others coming up.

I believe the DCN has served us all well with regard to COVID. Contrary to John Fuller's willingness to roll over on LGR he does appreciate the value of district councils in a national crisis. I took part in an APPG on local government finance and made the case for less centralised control of the money, finishing by saying that district councils are the most trusted level of local government by everyone apart from government. We failed to get Jenrick to agree to let us precept for an additional £5 just for this year and are continuing to campaign for more help for the leisure sector which we know is going to come out of COVID really badly and yet is going to be vital to the recovery.

We have spent a lot of time on the proposed planning reforms and all the horrors to come as a result. I was quoted in an LGA press release on the threat to the high street and to village centres through extending PDRs to retail. The response to the consultation from DCN has been robust and supported across parties. I believe some of the credit for the U-turn on housing numbers is because of this pressure.

And on elections. It was incredibly frustrating that civil servants and the DCN viewed the main issue as operational rather than political. However, the elections went ahead and we were then straight into arguments about continuing remote meetings once the emergency legislation expired. It is still hard to believe that this battle was lost and many LAs are now struggling to hold statutory meetings in unsuitable places and many like my own are incurring significant costs from having to hire alternative venues - in my case the main hangar at Duxford air Museum.

And finally, the DCN has changed its constitution to allow Unitary members.

Thank you to all those who have supported me in representing the Liberal Democrats on the DCN. It has been a great pleasure.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

County Councils Network Report

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse



CCN is a cross party grouping of 36 county authorities that make up the CCN are England's largest grouping of councils, with their 2,600 councillors representing some 26 million people, and covering 86 per cent of the country's

landmass. Collectively, they are responsible for 39 per cent of England's GVA, almost half the country's entire spend on children's and adult social care and maintain 70 per cent of local roads.
www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk

Since becoming the Group Leader of the Liberal Democrat group on CCN we have held pre group meetings to the main meetings taking place, at these meetings the Chief Executive of CCN attends and briefs the group on national issues and emerging themes it also allows for questions before the main meeting. I now attend the Leaders calls held every two weeks along with the Executive meetings that are held. There are many opportunities to join up the research and policy with Liberal Democrat campaigning.

Councillor Stephen Giles Medhurst acts as deputy leader (Herts) is leading on the Transport and Infrastructure Portfolio, he has already had some good media specifically on roads and potholes.

All meetings have been held by Microsoft teams which has proved what can be done in support of our environment.

Our challenges going forward will be SEND Children, along with Adult Social Care and the post COVID financial implications with the talk of a devolution.

CCN works with partners ranging from Impower, Price Thornton, Future gov and Newton are to name just some of the companies that support research and deliver policy papers Work Programme/Reports and Policy research can be found on the website.

A few examples:

- fire Service Reform / Governance
- bus strategy and changes
- planning reforms
- rural economy www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/ccn
- 'Children's social care: promoting prevention' report; extensive new study on children's services funding and the role of prevention in the future delivery of children's social care.
- 'Adult social care: extra care housing' – new report exploring the role of extra care housing in managing social care demand and reforming planning to increase supply.
- 'Adult social care: effective practice and systems in adult care and health –commissioning a major study focusing making the case for the continuing role of local government in commissioning and providing services, alongside investment.
- 'Economic growth: broadband; a new report on the rollout of super-fast broadband based on new analysis of speeds in county and rural areas, alongside a survey on the barriers and challenges faced by member councils in improving digital infrastructure.
- Shared Prosperity Fund: research and analysis undertaken with CCN member councils on EU funding streams to influence how the new Shared Prosperity Fund is directed.
- Climate Change: Facilitate best practice sharing, to be promoted through a publication, with the option of working with an external agency to provide an overview of work that is being done across the sector.

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Facebook Page www.facebook.com/groups/ccnlibdems/ closed group you need to ask to join.

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Policy Coordinator and Brexit Working Group

Councillor Chris White



I won't say the usual about it being a challenging year!

My role is to try and co-ordinate the efforts of the various representatives of the local government family who sit on federal party committees, including

Federal Board (myself with Terry Stacy), Federal Policy Committee, Federal Communications and Elections, Federal People Development, Federal Conference Committee and Federal Finance and Resource.

The old fault lines remain: in terms of getting the Federal Party to understand that the world is not just Westminster elections, it has been a case of two steps forward and one step back. But that means there has been progress and I am more confident than I was that ALDC is a valued partner and will be involved better in budget discussions and campaigning.

Problems remain:

- there is still duplication of functions, which we cannot afford
- there is still too little support where it can make a difference in terms of local elections and that is not something that can be blamed just in monetary resource. We need to use volunteers more
- the parliamentary side of the party – and FCEC – can be very good at coming to us for advice; on other occasions the LGA office is simply overlooked or consulted at the last minute
- the new disciplinary system is presenting some significant problems for councillors and council groups and will be difficult to amend and improve given the recent vote at Spring conference.

Even without all of this there are anyway massive challenges ahead, all the way from the need to rationalise the Party's chaotic IT systems architecture through to simply maintaining relevance.

The latter is something that troubles all of us, not just those who sit on the Federal Policy Committee: what is it we want to say on the doorstep (or the council chamber for that matter) about what the Liberal Democrats stand for? And how does that differ, for instance, from the Greens?

In some ways it is just a messaging exercise – finding three things on which we are fighting an election and repeating them consistently and frequently: basically doing nationally what we should be doing at local level.

But it's also having credible things to say without spending a couple of years developing heavyweight or – dare I say it – niche policies which have no impact in Acacia Avenue during a local (or general, for that matter) election campaign.

So it's understandable that a number of us are concerned that the party is likely to be committed to campaigning for regional parliaments, an issue that literally never gets mentioned by voters but could reduce us to looking irrelevant to a population stunned by COVID and the effects of growing inequality.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Audit, Commercial Advisory Board, and LGA Properties

Councillor David Neighbour



Audit committee

The Audit Committee meets twice a year. At the meetings the committee is responsible for signing off the Annual Accounts of the LGA and its various companies (IDEA,

LGACS and LGA (Properties)). We also oversee the activities of the Internal Audit contract which provides us with reassurance with regard to an agreed annual program. We also receive a quarterly update on a range of key indicators.

Highlights last year included: a review of the UKMBA (Municipal Bonds Agency) and a look at our procurement and commissioning policies. This year we will be looking at data/cyber security as well as a review of the LGAs green credentials. Although we still have four councils not in membership of the LGA, for the first time in many years we no longer have any councils on notice to withdraw.

Commercial Advisory Board

The Commercial Advisory Board meets four times a year. It oversees emerging commercial activity undertaken by the LGA, ranging from the roll out of specialised consultancy to projects such as the UKMBA (UK Municipal Bond Agency) and LGM (the Local Government Mutual). The Board operates as an arms-length company through LGACS Ltd which is responsible for the joint venture the Local Government Mutual with Regis Mutual Management Limited.

LGA (Properties)

My appointment as the Liberal Democrat Director of LGA (Properties) is to oversee the maintenance and letting of the property at 18 Smith Square, before this we were responsible for the refurbishment project when the decision was made to rent out several floors for commercial gain in an effort to mitigate the costs of the LGA which would otherwise result in subscription increases. The gross income from 18 Smith Square is circa £3 million this year up from £2.5 million last year. This is also the function I have just finished with the transfer of Layden House back to the LGA from LGMB (Local Government Management Board). The property boards have met on the same day as the Commercial Advisory Board.
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The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Office

The Liberal Democrat Group office provides direct support and advice to Liberal Democrat council groups and councillors whilst also acting as the day-to-day voice of the Liberal Democrats within the LGA. We currently have three full-time members of staff. Terry Stacy, the head of office, Rob Banks and Ryan Priest. Rob and Terry both have experience as Liberal Democrat Councillors and Ryan has stood as a candidate at local and Parliamentary level.

We help the Group to achieve its political objectives within the LGA and the party, working closely with LGA officers, Liberal Democrat HQ, our parliamentarians in both the House of Commons and House of Lords and with our colleagues at the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors with whom we organise joint events as well as sessions and fringes at both spring and autumn party conferences.

In addition to supporting the LGA Liberal Democrat Group we are also the first port of call for Liberal Democrat councillors in relation to a variety of policy, governance or legal issues.

We do weekly joint emails with ALDC to all councillors and ALDC members on a range of issues, news from the Liberal Democrats, local government news, good practice from council groups and councillors, highlight lobbying successes and details of events for councillors and campaigners. We also use Twitter; follow us on @libdemlocalgov.



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Head of the Group Office

Terry is responsible for the operation of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group. He also provides specific support on housing, welfare, fire and children's services.

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