

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



Liberal Democrats celebrate keeping control of the London Borough of Sutton – by the end of the current term the Lib Dems will be celebrating 40 years of control!



Lib Dem directly elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor, and the Lib Dem team celebrating their success at this year's election.

Contents

- 4 A message from the Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group and the 2022 Political Balance of the LGA
- 7 LGA Liberal Democrat Group Executive 2021-2023 and your Liberal Democrat LGA Board Representatives

Lead member reports

- 10 Children and Young People Board
- 12 LGA Liberal Democrat Group Whip
- 15 Community Wellbeing Board
- 17 Culture, Tourism and Sport Board
- 19 Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board
- 21 Improvement and Innovation Board
- 23 Resources Board
- 25 Safer and Stronger Communities Board
- 27 Fire Service Management Committee and Fire Commission
- 29 City Regions Board
- 31 People and Places Board
- 33 Liberal Democrat Retained Peers Report
- 36 District Councils Network Report
- 38 County Councils Network Report
- 40 Federal Party Coordinator Report
- 41 Local Partnerships and Audit Committee
- 43 LGA Commercial Advisory Board
- 45 The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Office

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

A message from the **Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group**



Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group

It's been a very busy first year as LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leader. Jumping straight into the role whilst also being new to the LGA has meant my first year has been one of learning, listening and meeting some fantastic councillors and officers.

I'd want to thank all of you as Liberal Democrat Councillors for the fantastic work that you do for your residents. I've really enjoyed visiting many of you in your local areas and I've seen first-hand the hard work and commitment you demonstrate every day.

As the cost of living crisis deepens, residents will look to you for support, and we will continue to bang the drum for local government through funding and powers that will make your job easier, and help the lives of the people you represent.

Another year of gains

Before polling day, many in the party were expecting to see around 80 to 100 gains, but we easily smashed that target, winning 224 seats. Following our amazing wins this year Liberal Democrats now have over 2,600 council seats in England and Wales (over 2,700 across the UK) and – as I write this – either a full majority or part of the leadership on 61 councils!

That's more Lib Dem councillors than we have had for years.

To name but a few, it was so good to see us returning to power in Hull and Stockport, gaining the new Westmorland and Furness unitary council, retaining control in Cheltenham, Portsmouth, South Cambs and St Albans and keeping the directly elected Mayoralty of Watford. We had a massive win on the new unitary in Somerset and took control of Woking and Wokingham. We were delighted to see the party win control of Gosport council, who have also returned to LGA membership.

We also lead administrations in Tunbridge Wells, West Oxfordshire, Powys and Huntingdonshire. Could 'Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells' be a Lib Dem voter?

And our colleagues in London had some excellent results, including keeping control of Richmond, Kingston and Sutton, some massive gains in Merton and returning to the council after some years in places like Lambeth and Croydon.

So in some places we are regaining ground lost during the coalition, but in others moving to our best ever results. On to 2023 – where we will be defending those incredible gains made in 2019.

Keeping in touch

We have continued to hold zoom calls to keep group leaders across the country in touch – be that in control or opposition, and send out weekly emails to all Lib Dem councillors with good practice, motions and press releases.

Over the next year, we're going to have a big push on improving social media channels and how we communicate with you.

Our peer support team have been kept busy with the changes of control and ongoing, year-round advice. I have visited councils and council leaders across the country, and supported colleagues facing elections this year. We supported the Lib Dem Councillors' Weekend and held fringe meetings at the Lib Dem autumn and spring conference.

Working with the wider party

Our key message to the party and the wider world is simple: 'Local Government Matters'. To this end, we have been supporting our campaigning councillors, working closely with ALDC and the party, for example funding the annual Lib Dem Councillors' weekend. As well as regular meetings with ALDC chief exec (Tim Pickstone) and chair (Prue Bray) I also meet with the party leadership – with Ed Davey, Mark Pack and CEO Mike Dixon. The group has regular meetings with the party's media team, helping raise local government's profile within the party. On the point of communications, I have met with the office and leadership teams to take forward our group's comms work.

We take part in regular 'cluster' meetings with our MPs and Lords on subjects ranging from climate change to health, children and young people and of course local government.

The LGA itself is a cross party body and I hold regular meetings with other political group leaders, and our office feeds into the LGA's corporate press release and briefing materials on a daily basis.

Thanks to all my fellow Lib Dem Leadership Board members – Heather Kidd, Bridget Smith and Alan Connett, to our LGA Lib Dem Board members and our Board leads for hard work over last year. Finally thank you to the Liberal Democrat office staff – Terry Stacy, Rob Banks and Ryan Priest.

Over the last year we have lost two great local government champions. The Liberal Democrat family is a sadder place at the terrible loss of Councillor Anita Lower, our Cities Board lead and former Group leader in Newcastle Upon Tyne, and Councillor Paul Clark, Deputy Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council. Our thoughts are with their friends and family.

The 2022 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.

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group's representation strengthened slightly in 2022, gaining another Vice Chair on a Board. No group has majority control.

OVERALL BALANCE	
CONSERVATIVE	38.2% - 1.7%
LABOUR	35.9% +0.1%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	13.2% +0.7%
INDEPENDENT	12.7% +0.8%

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leadership Team



Group Leader

Cllr Joe Harris
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Group Deputy Leader

Cllr Bridget Smith
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Group Chair

Cllr Heather Kidd
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Group Whip

Cllr Alan Connett
Teignbridge DC and Devon CC

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LGA Liberal Democrat Board members 2021-2023

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:

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

Children and Young People



Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (Lead)*
Cambridgeshire CC
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Cllr Mark Cory
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Cllr Dine Romero (Sub)
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City Regions



Cllr Gareth Roberts (Lead)*
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Cllr Carl Cashman
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Cllr Greg Stone
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Community Wellbeing



Cllr Sarah Osborne (Lead)*
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Cllr Mike Bell
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Cllr Dr Wendy Taylor (Sub)
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Culture, Tourism and Sport



Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (Lead)*
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Cllr Chris White
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Cllr Sean Macleod (Sub)
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Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport



Cllr Pippa Heylings (Lead) *
South Cambridgeshire DC
pippaheylings@gmail.com



Cllr Vikki Slade
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and Poole Council
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Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport

Cllr Stewart Golton (Sub) Leeds CC
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Fire Services

Cllr Keith Aspden (Lead)*
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Cllr Jeremy Hilton
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Cllr Roger Price (Sub)
Hampshire CC and Fareham DC
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Improvement and Innovation

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Mayor Peter Taylor
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Cllr Paul Crossley (Sub)
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People and Places

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Cllr Stan Collins
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Resources

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Cllr Richard Kemp
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Cllr Michael Headley (Sub)
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Safer Communities



Cllr Heather Kidd (Lead)*
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Cllr Jon Ball
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Cllr Kris Brown (Sub)
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District Councils Network Lead



Cllr Bridget Smith*
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County Councils Network Lead



Cllr Jerry Roodhouse*
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Council Rep on Federal Board and Policy Coordinator



Cllr Chris White*
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LGA Properties Board



Cllr David Neighbour*
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Audit



Cllr Howard Sykes MBE *
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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Children and Young People Board

Councillor Lucy Nethsingha



COVID impact

The impact of the COVID pandemic was a key issue for all of 2021, and it has not gone away. Schools and Councils continued to need to work differently throughout autumn and winter 2021. Disruption continued, with very high rates of COVID in schools throughout this period, and consequent loss of time in education for many children. It is now evident that some of the worst impact is on the youngest children who have lost out on time to develop social and language skills which are crucial to being ready to start school learning. The government response to catch up funding, especially for the youngest children remains woeful. There is no money at all for additional catch-up work with preschool children and speech and language support remains very hard to access. There is also a significant impact on the mental health of many older children and the mental health crisis among children and young people continues to be a nightmare for many families.

Social care

There are HUGE funding issues in the children's social care system, with almost all councils reporting significant overspends. The MacAlistair report which came out recently put the financial deficit within children's social care at £2.6 billion. I fear it is unlikely we will see that level of increased funding from central government, although if it helps to make the scale of the problems facing social care clear that will at least be of some use. The LGA has done some very useful work looking at where the money in the social care sector is going, with some analysis of the profits being made by a small number of large providers. It is very clear that the market is not working in this sector, but the solution is not at all clear. I would be very interested to hear whether some councils or groups of councils are considering getting together to increase provision of specialist services, which are the most expensive.

Education

The schools white paper published with the Queen's Speech had some welcome, as well as unwelcome elements. The move to allowing local authorities to set up their own Multi Academy Trusts, and greater recognition of the role of LAs in school, place planning, admissions and managing exclusions is all welcome, as is the proposed inspection of trusts. Less welcome is the expectation that all schools will be part of a 'good' Multi Academy Trust. There is however no date on when this is expected by, or information on what constitutes a 'good' MAT.

Changes in parliamentary team

Munira Wilson has taken over from Daisy Cooper as MP lead on Education. She is passionate about the subject, and in particular the issues surrounding young people's mental health, and it has been a pleasure working with her. Liaison with the wider parliamentary team has been a little more difficult during the past year, due to an increased number of meetings, and my own diary being significantly busier having taken over as Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council. Ryan has been hugely helpful in attending the liaison meetings – thank you Ryan.

Future campaign activity

The total failure by the government to tackle the impact of the pandemic on children and young people must remain a key focus of activity.

Improving provision for children and young people suffering from poor mental health must also remain a key focus, as the situation is not improving but getting worse.

I am keen to increase our focus on the failure of the apprenticeship levy to improve vocational education.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

LGA Liberal Democrat Group Whip

Councillor Alan Connett



Responding to the consultation on tithing

During the year, a consultation was undertaken on proposals to standardise arrangements for councillors' tithing. On behalf of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group, I prepared and submitted a response.

We highlighted concerns that many councillors reduce their work commitments in order to serve on councils – and consequently can often lose out through reduced pension payments. This should, we felt, be taken into consideration.

Additionally, the proposed arrangements for 'hardship relief' involved the assessment of 'household income' and we argued against that, believing others in the household cannot be expected or required to divulge their income.

The LGA Liberal Democrat group response to tithing can be found here: www.local.gov.uk/lga-libdem-group/our-press-releases/lga-liberal-democrat-group-response-consultation-tithing

Group elections

Elections for the various Group Offices and LGA Board and other appointments were held in May 2021. The results have been previously reported. The Executive has reviewed the election processes, as it normally does after each election. Concern was raised about candidates' use of email addresses for councillors to campaign. Advice received indicates that as the email addresses are available on council websites, such use is permitted.

Group contract

The Group Contract was introduced several years ago. It sets out the expectations of all those who hold Group Offices or serve on the various LGA Boards, Panels and related organisations.

During the year, concern was raised regarding the responsibilities the contract appeared to place on Substitute members who may be called up only occasionally to attend a Board meeting.

In response to the concern, the Group Contract has been amended to clarify the expectations on Substitute members. The revised contract is submitted to the Group's 2022 annual meeting at the LGA Conference for approval.

Reports and attendance

A summary of attendance of Board Members is included within this report.

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.

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.

Standards and pastoral support

I continue to be concerned about the length of time it can take for Standards complaints to be dealt with by authorities. It can be a 'dark cloud' which hangs over a councillor's head, as I have reported in each of the past two years.

The Group Office has supported several colleagues with regard to Standards matters and ALDC also offers a simple legal support advice service, which may also assist.

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 Cllr Joe Harris, Group Leader, Cllr Bridget Smith, Deputy Leader, and Cllr Heather Kidd, Chair. I am also grateful to all of my colleagues on the Boards and Panels for their support.

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Executive member attendance 2021-23	09/09/21	21/10/21	27/01/22	10/03/22
Joe Harris	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bridget Smith	Y	Apologies	Y	Y
Heather Kidd	Y	Y	Apologies	Y
Alan Connett	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lucy Nethsingha	Y	Y	Apologies	Y
Gareth Roberts	Apologies	Y	Y	Y
Gerald Vernon Jackson	Y	Y	Apologies	Y
Sarah Osborne	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pippa Heylings	Y	Y	Y	Y**
Liz Green	Y	Y	Y	Y
Emily Smith	Y	Y	Y	Y
Keith Aspden	Y	Apologies	Y	Y
Dave Neighbour	Y	Y	Y	Y
Keith House	Y	Apologies	Apologies	Y
Howard Sykes	N/A*	Y*	Y	Y
Jerry Roodhouse	Apologies	Y	Y	Apologies
Chris White	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	Y

Note that this report goes to press before deadlines for June executive meeting:

*Howard Sykes was formally appointed to the Audit role on 26 October 2021

**Apologies for lateness

Reports tabled	21/10/21	12/21**	27/01/22	10/03/22
Joe Harris	Verbal	Y	verbal	Verbal
Bridget Smith*	Y	Y	NA	Y
Heather Kidd*	Y	Y	NA	Y
Alan Connett	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lucy Nethsingha	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gareth Roberts	Late tabled	Y	Y	N
Gerald Vernon Jackson	Y	Y	N	Y*
Sarah Osborne	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pippa Heylings	Y	Y	Y	N
Liz Green	Y	Y	Y	Y
Emily Smith	Y	Y	Y	Y
Keith Aspden	Late tabled	Y	N	Y
Keith House	Y	Y	Y	Y
Howard Sykes	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jerry Roodhouse	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chris White	Y	Y	Y	N

Note:

*Heather Kidd reports back in her capacity as Safer Comms lead member and Bridget Smith as DCN lead

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Community Wellbeing Board

Councillor Sarah Osborne



It has been an extremely busy year with much of the Board's business spent responding to policies announced by Government. I received numerous requests to speak at or Chair events and I gave a presentation on the LGA's perspective on the Health and Care Bill at a Kings Fund conference, chaired a session on Climate Justice at the LGA and Association of Directors of Public Health conference and one on the national strategy for autistic children at the National Children and Adult Services Conference.

All areas that the board covers have in common two issues that are causing a host of problems; underfunding and staff shortages. In every sector we looked at, labour shortages were seen to be a significant problem and the extra burdens placed on services are not being adequately funded. Staff Shortages in care and the NHS are well publicised but there are mounting worries about shortages of social workers and in public health teams for example.

Adult social care

We consistently raised the need for the Government to address immediate and long-term funding of adult social care and believe the introduction of the care cap is an enormous undertaking for councils, will absorb huge resources, leave councils taking all the flak when residents paying the NI levy feel they are paying twice for care. Also, the proposed changes leave people who need the most protection from catastrophically high care costs – those with low to moderate levels of wealth with less protection than wealthier people.

LGA response is here:

www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/lga-response-people-heart-care-adult-social-care-reform-white

Health and Care Bill

Although there is cross party support for the Bill's focus on improving the health and wellbeing of the population through greater integration between NHS and local government, we raised several concerns and worked with parliamentarians to secure amendments to the Bill. We do support the formation of integrated care boards however we have worries about being them being NHS led and end up being a performance management tool and the role for LA's being tokenism. We continue to emphasise that integrated care systems need the freedom and flexibility to address the particular challenges of their areas, that system leaders need to work with existing place-based partnerships – in particular health and wellbeing boards and that Integration not an end in itself but a means of achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals and communities. We stressed that government need to fund the significant capital investment councils will be required to make to implement many of the plans such as the digital technologies and systems needed for integrated person-centred care.

Public health

Budgets are inadequate given extra burdens placed on councils and the Health Targets in the Levelling Up Paper are not going to be met. Increased funding is urgently needed to enable councils to develop long term strategies to prevent widening health inequalities, including developing strategies to tackle childhood obesity.

I liaised with Parliamentary team and Lib Dem Health and Care Portfolio holders (and shadow spokespeople). They have been very helpful, sharing both the difficulties experienced and examples of good practice.

I've been part of the working group (chaired by Baroness Judith Jolly) that has prepared the Lib Dem 'Caring Society' consultation paper reviewing the party's policies on social care and developing updated proposals.

We have completed our first draft which will go to the FPC for their views.

Huge thanks to the Lib Dem team and office for their support.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson



Inevitably this year has been busy with the pandemic and its aftermath causing real problems for councils and their contractors and communities.

The Culture, Tourism and Sport Board met as normal during the year, with our last meeting held in person in Coventry) as the UK City of Culture).

I think our Board is the only Board to meet outside of London, and our next meeting is in Derbyshire. This was an initiative I brought in, so we are not so Londoncentric. The Board works in a totally cross party and inclusive manner. This is a great help, and something I work hard to achieve.

Culture

The role of local councils is often not understood by many. Of the 1100 theatres in the UK around one half are either owned or financially supported by local councils. They have begun to recover well. The Arts Council remain a strong supporter of Local Government and the arts, and Ministers occasionally get to understand. We eventually managed to have a meeting with the previous Secretary of State who told us he had only just been told that councils put in around double the money the Arts Council contribute to the arts across the country. He then lost his job and his successor is even more difficult to get access. The cultural industries are a hugely important part of the UK economy and have the opportunity to provide significant jobs growth. This is something that few Ministers or LEPs seem to understand.

Sport

The Minister for Sport is much more open to working with us. The main problem area is that so many sports centres and swimming pools are coming to the end of their lives. Swim England have published a report saying they expect around 2,000 of the 4,600 publicly accessible

swimming pools to close by 2030. The huge rise in energy costs look as if they will make things even worse and we may lose up to 50 per cent of pools. The Minister may be happy to talk, but he has not been able to provide councils and pool operators with additional cash to keep pools open. We know the private sector are not big players in open access pools than minority communities like to access council run facilities. My fear is that without specific government support we will see a string of sport centre and pool closures over the next few years.

Tourism has been really badly hit by the pandemic and is now being hit by staff shortages. We continue to work closely with the Tourism Alliance to help their members understand council processes and to make sure the same advice is available from all councils. They have been really grateful for this support. Quite often I am asked to meet with All Party Parliamentary Groups, including the one on camp sites and camper vans. Again, they are universally grateful for the support of Local Government.

Finally, my usual thanks to those in the LGA Lib Dem Office, to Chris White who also sits on the board and for all the feedback from councils across the country.

If you do have any questions please do send them to me at geraldvj@gmail.com



We are now the official opposition on Merton Council

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

Councillor Pippa Heylings



COP 26

One of the most important events of this year was the global climate summit, COP 26, in Glasgow. This is the year that the UK held the COP Presidency and a huge opportunity for climate leadership. Yet there was no mention of local councils in the draft Glasgow negotiating text. Both before and during COP 26, I helped lead the LGA effort with international local government to successfully lobby for the inclusion of the invaluable role of local and regional governments in the final international agreement that was finally adopted national governments around the world. This included speaking at the plenary to world leaders as the COP representative of local government worldwide. It's now time to put words into action.

Planning reform

As a result of much LGA lobbying previously – and as a consequence of the shock Chesham and Amersham by-election result – the government pulled back from a large part of the proposed Planning Reforms. It is good to see that the proposed zoning for development and growth has disappeared as this would have taken away the voice of local planning authorities and local residents at the detail stage. I have commented on the proposed introduction of a new levy (either sitting alongside or replacing S106) which, in its current state, does not provide 'infrastructure first' and leaves local authorities with few levers to ensure good place-making. We continue to argue for greater investment in social housing for rent and in council housing.

Rough sleeping and homelessness

During COVID, the 'Getting Everyone In' programme was very successful, focussing minds on rough sleeping as a public health issue and preventing a crisis. Rough sleeping numbers are at a record 9 year low. However, our work at the LGA has identified systemic drivers which could soon undermine this achievement. I gave evidence at the APPG inquiry into government progress in ending rough sleeping by 2027. Now more than ever with the cost of living crisis hitting the vulnerable hardest, I called for better partnerships at a central government level and a focus on broader homelessness prevention as opposed to being focused on the crisis end of homelessness. I also highlighted the emerging homelessness situation with Ukrainian families.

Not enough money for buses

Despite our LGA lobbying, the final funding allocation in support of the National Bus Strategy is really disappointing, reducing from the original £3 billion to £1.2 billion and this has meant that many local authorities have not received support for their Bus Service Improvement Plans. We made very strong comments about this at the Transport Committee inquiry.

Electric vehicle infrastructure strategy

The second barrier to EV uptake is the lack of comprehensive and reliable EV charging stations around the country. At the Board, we called for greater clarity on the role of local authorities and for further investment funding and submitted detailed comments to the new EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy.

Water and nature

We are looking carefully at the impact of moratoriums on house building within river catchments experiencing high levels of nutrient pollution or low water levels. This could be the canary in the mine and has huge implications for planning, housebuilding and Council budgets. I have also commented on need for greater resourcing of Councils to undertake new duties for Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

My thanks to fellow LGA Liberal Democrat Group Board members Vikki Slade and our substitute member, Stewart Golton, for their help this year.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Improvement and Innovation Board

Councillor Liz Green



For those reading this, who do not know what the Improvement and Innovation board covers, it essentially looks at how the LGA can help councils improvement - through training, peer challenges, workbooks, case studies, webinars, mentoring, data analysis and many more ways - to find out about the support offer for 2022/23

visit www.local.gov.uk/publications/sector-support-offer-2022-23. It monitors the spending of the government grant from DLUHC and defines the programmes of support.

In a year that has slowly seen things return to 'normal' – the officers of the LGA with members of the board have looked at how it fared with the quantity and quality of the support offered to councils. It has seen a mix of a return to traditional face-to-face support with some continuing online. The Government grant of around £17m to deliver sector led improvement has been resulted in:

- 134 peer challenges and remote peer support (half corporate peer challenges)
- finance support provided to more than 55 councils
- targeted work force support was provided to 79 councils
- 100 per cent of respondents said that the Housing Advisors Programme has had a positive impact overall on their authority
- the Behavioural Insights Conference took place on 22/2/22, with 570 delegates in attendance on the day
- the climate change programme has supported 328/333 (98 per cent) councils and 95 per cent of councils state that this offer has had a positive impact

- more than 2,000 councillors benefited from training and development opportunities
- overall the LGA met 85 of the 87 KPI's set by the Government.

Other work streams that councillors may find useful to look into more.

- **Councillor Guide to Cyber Security**
www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-guide-cyber-security
- **Greenhouse gas accounting tool**
www.localpartnerships.org.uk/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool/
- **Climate change hub** – including monthly e-bulletin and case studies –
www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub
- **Procurement and commissioning support** – Councillors' workbook
<https://tinyurl.com/ykbw9382>
- **Better 2-way engagement between councils and residents: a guide**
<https://tinyurl.com/yt3cyf8e>
- **Behavioural insights programme** has now produced 10 podcasts focussing on different areas
<https://tinyurl.com/2p9ynuhp>
- **Innovation zone** at LGA conference – widely accepted as the best part of the conference!
- Overview of all **other boards' improvement** work.

Looking forward, officers have negotiated a small increase in the grant from DLUHC for 2022/2023 year, but much of this will be taken up by other cost increases. They have also reduced the number of KPIs so that work can be done that delivers for local government sector rather than ticking boxes for central government.

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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.

This last year has been one of transition from the COVID to post-COVID world yet much of the Resources Board's work has been business as usual: lobbying government on fair funding, handling pay negotiations through National Employers, and understanding the mess that is the broken audit system.

Government has failed to deliver on long-promised reviews and updates on fair funding, business rates review and changes to new homes bonus and more. With its attention on COVID, Brexit, Ukraine and partygate, routine business for government has increasingly stalled though lack of capacity: proof that axing 20 per cent of the civil service will make government worse not better. I have no sense that any of this work will recommence any time soon.

Pay has been the Board's biggest issue through the year, with a settlement to the 2021/22 pay claim only being reached at the end of February. It will be the most complex issue over the coming year as planned increases in the National Minimum Wage wipe out lower pay points and put pressure upwards on pay bands. The inflationary pressure here is still not widely understood across the sector and will lead for a difficult negotiation on pay over the coming year.

The audit system is failing due to a lack of auditors and increasing regulatory burden. A slow response from government to leading the sector has compounded the challenge which has resulted in hundreds of delayed audits. This problem will take years to fix and would be helped by a simplified audit process. The Board is pressing government in this area. New contracts for future audits are due to be awarded by PSAA later this year.

Looking forward, the cost of living crisis, inflation, and potential recession will need to be the Board's focus over the coming year. Thoughts and experiences of colleagues would be good to share.

Finally, to record my thanks to Richard Kemp, and to our team at the LGA in Smith Square, who have given me fulsome support on the Board in a year of increasing complexity.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Councillor Heather Kidd



This has been a busy year on the Board and a steep learning curve for new members to the Board. The variety and extent of the areas covered is wide and much of the work is confidential. There are a huge number of papers to be signed off from the board on Government strategy and legislation. Work this year includes:

Building safety New measures will force industry to pay to remove cladding and protect leaseholders from high costs were unveiled by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up as part of proposed amendments to the Building Safety Bill.

Under the plans, developers and manufacturers would be blocked from the housing market by being refused planning permission and building control sign-off if they did not help fix cladding safety issues.

New powers would also allow cladding companies to be sued and subject to fines for defective products, and protections for leaseholders would be extended to cover other fire safety defects.

The progress and effectiveness of this will be an area to follow.

Violent extremism and counter-terrorism strategy work continues with the special interest group.

Taxi licencing and the levelling up white paper which has buried within it a section on taxi licencing. The Board is asking for:

- the development of a national database of all licensed taxi/PHV drivers to facilitate greater information sharing between partners and assist with safeguarding
- to implement some limits on out of area working by drivers
- to develop national minimum standards on key issues such as safeguarding.

It will be particularly important to make sure that work on this either side of national borders, England / Wales and England / Scotland is joined up and not exclusive.

Work continues on the **Police and Crime Commissioner Review**.

Modern slavery – work on this includes prevention, victim support, enforcement and involving Public Health.

The board also has regular briefings on Violence against Women and Girls, Domestic abuse, cyber security, drugs and a range of other community safety issues

I have also joined the Beach & Water Safety Special Interest Group which has proved interesting and useful.

Both Jon Ball and Kris Brown our substitute on the Board have proved hard working members and I thank them for their support.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Fire Services Annual Report

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 Jeremy Hilton, my colleague on FSMC, and to Councillors Roger

Price and Carolyn Lambert, our substitute members, alongside all Lib Dem members of the Fire Commission.

During this year we have:

- Prepared for May's Fire Reform White Paper.
- Continued to lobby against unwanted 'take overs' from Mayors or Police and Crime Commissioners, of Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Made building safety one of our key priorities, responding to the Fire Safety Bill and Grenfell Tower tragedy.
- 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.
- 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.
- Held the Fire Conference, FSMC and Fire Commission meetings virtually and more recently in person.

May's Fire Reform white paper and recent national fire inspections has focused our 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 LGA Fire Conference in Newcastle. I chaired the conference seminar on how fire services are responding to the climate emergency and last year we 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.

As we approach 2022/2023, 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 Gareth Roberts



City Regions Board, over the last year, has continued to play a vital role in shaping how local government responds to various challenges, including but not limited to greater devolution of powers, the government's levelling up agenda, employment and skills and, of course, the unfolding ramifications of Brexit and COVID on the economies of City Regions. This report is not intended to be a comprehensive digest of all discussions and subjects, but does address some of the more significant discussions held at board level.

Levelling Up

This has formed the largest part of the board's work over the last municipal year. Unsurprisingly much of the work has revolved around trying to anticipate, or indeed second guess, announcements coming out of the newly formed DHLUC. The final release of the Levelling Up white paper has led to the establishment of a joint inquiry with the People and Places Board into Levelling Up Locally.

The Inquiry will focus on four aspects:

1. **Funding and alignment** – The practical questions about how levelling up in the broadest sense might be paid for and, at a more granular level, the opportunities to align policy and funding interventions at the local level to improve the quality of public service outcomes and address concentrations of deprivation.
2. **Leadership** – The role of local leadership in binding communities and anchor institutions together to strengthen resilience, align national priorities, and articulate policy interventions necessary to support balanced economic growth.
3. **Productivity and prosperity** – The role of the private and public sector in addressing inter and intra-regional inequalities and the shift towards sustainable and inclusive models of prosperity.

4. **Place and identity** – The questions of place and identity within a post-pandemic context and the potential of local social and cultural infrastructure to strengthen inward investment, encourage entrepreneurialism and address economic inequalities.

Urban summit

As part of the board's work a City Regions Urban Summit was convened at Smith Square. The purpose being to spark an ongoing discussion regarding the role of cities within their regions as drivers of growth, as creators of 'place' and as unfortunately owing to COVID attendance was relatively low, however the scope and ambition of the event, along with the quality of contributions, including that of Lord Kerlake, ensured that in spite of the low attendance the event was largely a success. The decision has been taken to continue a series of events with a view to continuing the discussions started at this summit within a series of future events.

Employment and skills

Over the year the board has pursued the refresh of Work Local. Work Local is a synthesis of the LGA's Employment and Skills devolution proposals. A cost benefit analysis commissioned by the LGA, from the Learning and Work Institute, reveals a Work Local approach could each year result in a 15 per cent increase in the number of people improving their skills or finding work, delivering benefits to residents, businesses, the health and wellbeing of local communities while reducing costs to the public. The challenge in delivering this, however, lies in the complexity of the existing system which covers at least 49 national employment and skills-related schemes or services across England, managed by multiple Whitehall departments and agencies, delivered over different boundaries by various providers, costing £20 billion. No single organisation is responsible for coordinating this locally or nationally.

The Work Local paper published on 17 May 2022 hopes to establish a national and local government 'Work Local Board' be agreed by end of 2022 with an independent voice for others (business, employers and others). It should co-design new and repurpose existing provision, commit to bring forward a more joined-up, longer-term funding system and pave the way for any legislative change required to support devolution.

I would like to thank my fellow Cities Board member Councillor Carl Cashman and our team of officers at the LGA for their help and support over the last 12 months and I look forward to seeing them in person as we emerge blinking from the enforced isolation of the pandemic and return to regular in person meetings.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

People and Places Board

Councillor Emily Smith



The People and Places Board seeks to influence national policy in the interests of non-metropolitan communities.

My first year on the board, has been focused on Levelling Up, COVID recovery, digital connectivity, employment and skills, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and 'rural proofing' some of the policy areas that other boards lead on, such as youth services, social care, transport, and housing. At the beginning of the year, we revised the board's Terms of Reference to reflect the fact that all the work we do is carried out in the context of the climate emergency.

Levelling Up

- People and Places, with the City Regions Boards, have initiated a Levelling Up Locally Inquiry. This inquiry will look at how the Government's levelling up agenda might better strengthen local communities and look beyond and respond to demographic changes that have arisen from the pandemic.
- Levelling Up funds are now available, but I am concerned that local enterprise partnerships have to support applications for funding made by local councils.
- Every area has a unique labour market – based on employment growth, qualification levels, unemployment, inactivity, vacancy rates. Government's national approach to employment and skills provision will fall short of their aims to ensure greater equality of opportunity. Our board has published 'Work Local: Unlocking talent to Level Up' an alternative approach that puts local authorities at the heart of planning employment and skills in our places: www.local.gov.uk/publications/work-local-unlocking-talent-level
- We have continued the work of the board from last year on Digital Connectivity and in particular the resilience of mobile reception.

Green skills and agriculture

- The post-Brexit financial support for environment land management is not fit for purpose.
- It was agreed that skills for retrofitting buildings should be prioritised by the boards working on climate action more directly, but there is a need for local government to work with landowners and farmers on net zero and biodiversity gain is often missing from climate action planning.
- Minette Batters, President of the NFU joined our board meeting in March to discuss share areas of interest: the impact of international trade deals on UK food production and employees, skills gaps, and access to affordable housing for agricultural.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

- We had some success in lobbying for the UKSPF funds to be allocated to councils based on need as opposed to councils having to bid for funding. However, despite commitments made via the Brexit Task Force, the UKSPF pot is much smaller than the funds that were available via European Social Fund.

Working with parliamentary colleagues

- I have started attending DEFRA Cluster meetings with Tim Farron MP, Baroness Cathy Bakewell and Baroness Kate Parminter to discuss policy matters that our parliamentary colleagues are working on, and issues to inform local and national Lib Dems campaigns. We agreed to try and ensure that the party has strong policy on environmental land management, food security, food poverty, biodiversity and rural public services.

The coming year

- I am speaking at the Employment and Skills Summit 2022 and chairing a session on planning at the LGA Conference.
- The cost-of-living crisis and how it impacts rural and coastal areas will be a focus for me in the coming months. The impact of 'second homes' in tourist areas on the availability of affordable homes, the cost of Heating Oil, which is not included in fuel cost support packages, and skills work are all ongoing.

Huge thanks to my fellow Lib Dem board members for their input and commitment to the board's work this year, Cllr Stan Collins, Cllr Caroline Leaver, and substitute Cllr Michael Mullaney.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Liberal Democrat Retained Peers

Councillor Alan Connett



Supporting Liberal Democrats in local government

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

Facilitated 'away-days', training and development opportunities, Peer Mentoring, support for service specific issues and much more, are the bread and butter of what we do... along with a team of experienced and knowledgeable Liberal Democrat councillors who form our pool of Member Peers.

In the year April 2021 to end of March 2022, we have:

- arranged **52** Member Peer Assignments
- provided Mentoring support for 11 councillors
- delivered nine Change of Control support programmes
- provided a range of general advice and support to Liberal Democrat Council and Group Leaders, Groups and councillors.

Our work is part of the LGA's Sector Led Improvement programme which includes the Highlighting Leadership offer which is particularly valuable to all councillors. It includes the excellent Leadership Academy as well as the high-quality Leadership Essentials events.

Winning control

A significant part of the team's work is supporting Liberal Democrat councillors as part of the annual Change of Control programme, following the election each May. Most often, this is where we have won control, or form a partnership administration.

We have also this year been helping and supporting a handful of 'lone' Liberal Democrat councillors who were elected in May, along with some of our smaller groups who had been asked to support a minority administration.

We always recommend a written agreement is secured so everyone is clear what is offered, what is being secured and how such an agreement can be ended, and we have an easily adaptable 'template' for groups to use.

Training for group whips

There's currently a gap in the comprehensive training and development programme the LGA offers councillors – and that is for the role of a Group Whip. We have had requests over the past three years for such training. We have put the case to the LGA and I hope we will succeed in being able to offer a course during 2022-23.

Keeping in touch with leaders

I have reported in the last two years on the launch and success of the weekly 'conference calls' for Council Leaders and also for Group Leaders. The conferences have continued although attendance is reducing and this may suggest their purpose is not as relevant as it has been.

Peer assignments and mentoring

Join the team. We welcome applications to become a Member Peer and especially welcome expressions of interest from women, young councillors, councillors with good experience in planning, adult and children's services, finance and housing and social media.

If this is you, don't hide your light... stand up, come forward, join the team.

Email ryan.priest@local.gov.uk for an application form. Do it NOW.

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. We have also been providing more Peer Mentors.

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 Councillors Network

Councillor Bridget Smith



The last 2 years on the DCN has been mainly spent dealing with COVID and Local Government Reform. We are now principally concerned with the Ukrainian Crisis and the Levelling Up agenda, so different names but very similar problems.

The Government's proposals for local government reorganisation signals the death knell for all district councils. Districts are not to be part of the decision to enter a deal nor will they be voting members of the eventual structure. To add insult to injury their powers and responsibilities can be grabbed without agreement.

Campaigning opportunities for Liberal Democrat councillors

1. District Councils have shown during the COVID Crisis and again with the Ukrainian Crisis that they are the level of local government that is flexible and responsive enough to act fast, efficiently and cost effectively. Massive County Deals will result in a democratic deficit which will silence the voice of our residents and hinder local government to do what it does so well.
2. Ukraine. What happens to our guest at the end of 6 months? How will local authorities cope with the avalanche of homeless applications which will result? Why has government not mandated a universal offer from bus companies to provide subsidised travel for Ukrainian guests? LAs have no data on people here on the Families Scheme, this means that we have an unfair system with these people receiving no £200 payment or other locally arranged help and support.

Work I and my Lib Dem Board colleagues have done since the last report

1. I have been meeting regularly with Lord Harrington the Refugees Minister to promote the concerns and successes of District Councils in coping with the crisis. I have shared this information with our office at LGA.
2. I have been working with DCN colleagues on a robust defence of district councils to ministers and we have suggested changes to the Levelling Up White Paper before it moves to its next stage.

Work I am planning to do

I have been invited to an in person meeting with Lord Harrington where I will do more to highlight the problems we are facing but also promote the value of Districts leading on this work.

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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.

Leading recovery – delivering renewal

The Liberal Democrat group on CCN is now the second largest grouping with us taking control of more Councils. The Chief Executive of CCN is attending Lib Dem group meetings and briefs the Lib Dem group on emerging issues and updates on specific policy matters. This has allowed time for us to discuss what our view is on specific items. The Leaders calls are held monthly post COVID. The Executive of CCN meetings is attended by me and Stephen Giles-Midhurst and it decides on such items as the business plan for CCN.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst acts as deputy leader (Herts) and is leading on the Transport and Infrastructure Portfolio, some good media specifically on roads and potholes. All CCN Meetings have been held by Microsoft teams but the CCN conference in November was held in person.

During the course of the year, I have met with the District Council Network (DCN) Lib Dem lead to discuss levelling up papers that are coming out of Government. We have agreed to continue meeting and discussing Lib Dem views on the matter of devolution. It is agreed that the Liberal Democrats need to engage on this matter and that it will vary from community to community. CCN will continue campaigning on this matter and is developing further policy.

The CCN priorities for 2022/23

1. **Local government finance** ensuring that CCN members have the funding they need to support the services that matter to their residents.
2. **Adult social care and health** making sure that the voice of counties is taken into account as the government pushes ahead with reform of adult social care and seeks greater integration of health and social care.
3. **Children's services and education** articulating the increasing financial pressure on children's services, SEND and Home to School Transport.
4. **Devolution and reform** supporting members who are in the first wave of county deals and ensuring that proposals in the Levelling Up White Paper benefits all CCN members.
5. **Economic growth and levelling up** focusing on the role of counties in economic growth, highlighting the activity they undertake to support the private sector and drive the recovery as we emerge from the pandemic.
6. **Housing and communities** continue to actively influence forthcoming planning reforms, and continue to push our calls for the reintroduction of strategic planning as a replacement for the duty to cooperate.
7. **Climate change and net-zero** secure greater recognition about the role CCN members will need to have as part of the national response to the climate emergency.

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Facebook

www.facebook.com/groups/ccnlibdems

This is a closed group you need to ask to join.

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Federal Party Coordinator Report

Councillor Chris White



Federal committees

A number of councillors sit on the Federal committees. We meet monthly to exchange notes and touch base and these are just some of the issues we have run with over the past year:

- The danger of duplication between the work of ALDC and the Federal Party, especially in relation to training: some progress has been made but we are not out of the woods yet.
- The effectiveness of field officers and their relationship with ALDC: the message appears now to be understood.
- Trying to fix the political damage done by the conference resolution which called for 380,000 new homes a year without consideration of green belt issues or the type of housing we should be seeking: conference is being asked to consider further options.
- The failure to service members in a way which will make them feel they want to remain members: we have supplied the Party with evidence from other similar membership organisations.
- The need for a more evidence-based approach to messaging, which appears to be under way, with important polling data being made available to the relevant committees
- The issues of conference: the general feeling that virtual conferences had run their course.

The danger that conference might remove councillor representation from the Federal Board seems to have passed, and the most recent conference resolution means that the Board will be streamlined.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Local Partnerships and Audit Committee

Councillor Howard Sykes MBE



Local Partnerships

Local Partnerships provide many services to the public sector: Housing, Energy, infrastructure, RE:FIT, PPP, PFI and MIM, Climate Response, Assurance, Waste, Commercialisation and Reorganisation, Health and Social Care.

We welcome the opportunity to talk to councillors and councils to see how we can help deliver your priorities. For further information: localpartnerships.org.uk or drop me an email or give me a call. The Local Government Association, HM Treasury, and the Welsh Government jointly own Local Partnerships and I was appointed to the Board in August 2021. The Board met in October (Strategy Day), December, January, March, and May.

There was a good induction for new members as far as I was concerned. Reports and very detailed and produced in a timely manner. Staff are very helpful and happy to talk. The scope and pace of their workload, delivered by a small staff team, has impressed me.

The governance and board structure has just been reviewed by the Centre for Scrutiny – its recommendations are under consideration. One of them is to reduce places on the Board and re-instate a wider reference group that has not been enacted for several years. The danger of this is the Liberal Democrats will be one of the losers on the Board and will no longer be directly represented. If this is the case it should be resisted.

The Board Chair Sir David Wootton JP is standing down and Keith Fraser has been appointed. Long standing board member Dr Barry Quirk CBE has also stood down after 15 years and Jackie Belton has replaced him. Sean Hanson, Chief Executive has just announced he is leaving after six years in August.

Therefore, there are quite a few changes at a senior level, and it will be interesting to see how those pan out. The appointment of a new chief executive will be key going forward. A process has been agreed with the various stakeholders on the Board to be included in that appointment process.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee has met just once (November 2021) since I was appointed to it. The next meeting was scheduled for 6 June.

I have challenged whether just two meetings a year was sufficient to fully discharge our proper responsibilities.

As a result, it was agreed that performance and financial reports would now be shared with the committee every quarter. The quarter three reports were supplied in early April 2022.

We agreed, on-line, to the procurement of the LGA's external auditors using the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework. When the bid period closed at 4pm on Thursday 6 January 2022, only one firm had submitted a response: PKF Littlejohn LLP. Eleven firms received the tender papers and three actively declined during the tender period.

PKF Littlejohn LLP are the current external auditor for the LGA Group. A full evaluation of the PKF Littlejohn LLP bid was undertaken, to ensure that they have prepared a compliant bid, and to the requisite quality standards demanded.

The procurement has been deemed to be legal under procurement laws, notwithstanding that there was just a single response. This was reported to the Boards of the LGA, IDeA and LGACS. The Boards of the Leadership Centre and CfGS were also be advised of the decision.

Disappointingly, and surprisingly, no induction whatsoever was arranged for new members of the Audit Committee. We are learning as we go, although the expectation had been of something better from the LGA.

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LEAD MEMBER REPORT

LGA Commercial Advisory Board

Councillor David Neighbour



At the last quarterly meeting of the Commercial Advisory Board held on March 22nd, we discussed three areas, namely: the commercial use of our two buildings, ongoing commercial activity within the LGA and the current status of the UK Municipal Bonds Agency.

The update on the building in Farringdon focused on the project to upgrade the power output so as to enable the lease of the two ground floor retail units, this is progressing within budget and should allow a rental income later in 2022/23. A verbal report was given on the situation with tenants in Smith Square, feedback from them remains favourable with an increased use of facility hire above and beyond their rental floorspace. Following the winding up both LGMB (2020/21) and LGA (Properties) (2021/22), oversight of the use of the buildings has passed to the LGA Executive Board using the Commercial Advisory Board as its vehicle moving forwards.

The LGA is currently undertaking a review of its income generating activities, working with the Commercial Ideas Lab to improve the current approach to commercial activity development. As well as a briefing to senior leaders at the LGA the proposal will include a consistent approach to identifying opportunities for tendering, decision making and completion of a competitive bid. Will conduct a review of grant funded activity to better understand their income generating potential as a risk mitigation tool in the event of diminished grants. Consider how the employee recognition scheme can support the development of income generating activity.

The UK Municipal Bonds Agency exists to provide a viable alternative to the Public Works Loan Board. It has been having problems getting bonds to market due to COVID, followed by the base rate rise and the Ukrainian crisis.

There are still two prospects for a bond issue, firstly with a Combined Waste Authority and also with the GLA (the Mayor announced his intention to issue a £500 million Environmental, Social and Governance bond).

The LGA provided a loan facility to allow the set up and progress of UKMBA prior to income being received from bond fees and repayments. Following the completion of the annual audit a decision will need to be taken regarding deferred management fees.

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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**, Political Advisor, and **Ryan Priest**, Political Assistant. 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**



Terry

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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 and fire.

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Rob

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Political Adviser

Rob provides support for: Environment; Economy and Transport; Community Wellbeing including Adult Social Care; People and Places; and Safer Communities and Rob supports the regular council leader calls.

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Ryan

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Political Assistant

Ryan provides support for Children and Young People and supports the regular Opposition Leader calls, in addition to Local Government Improvement and peer support work.

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The Lib Dems returned to the leadership at Stockport for the first time since 2016



The Liberal Democrat Group in Somerset is the largest in the country with 61 councillors



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