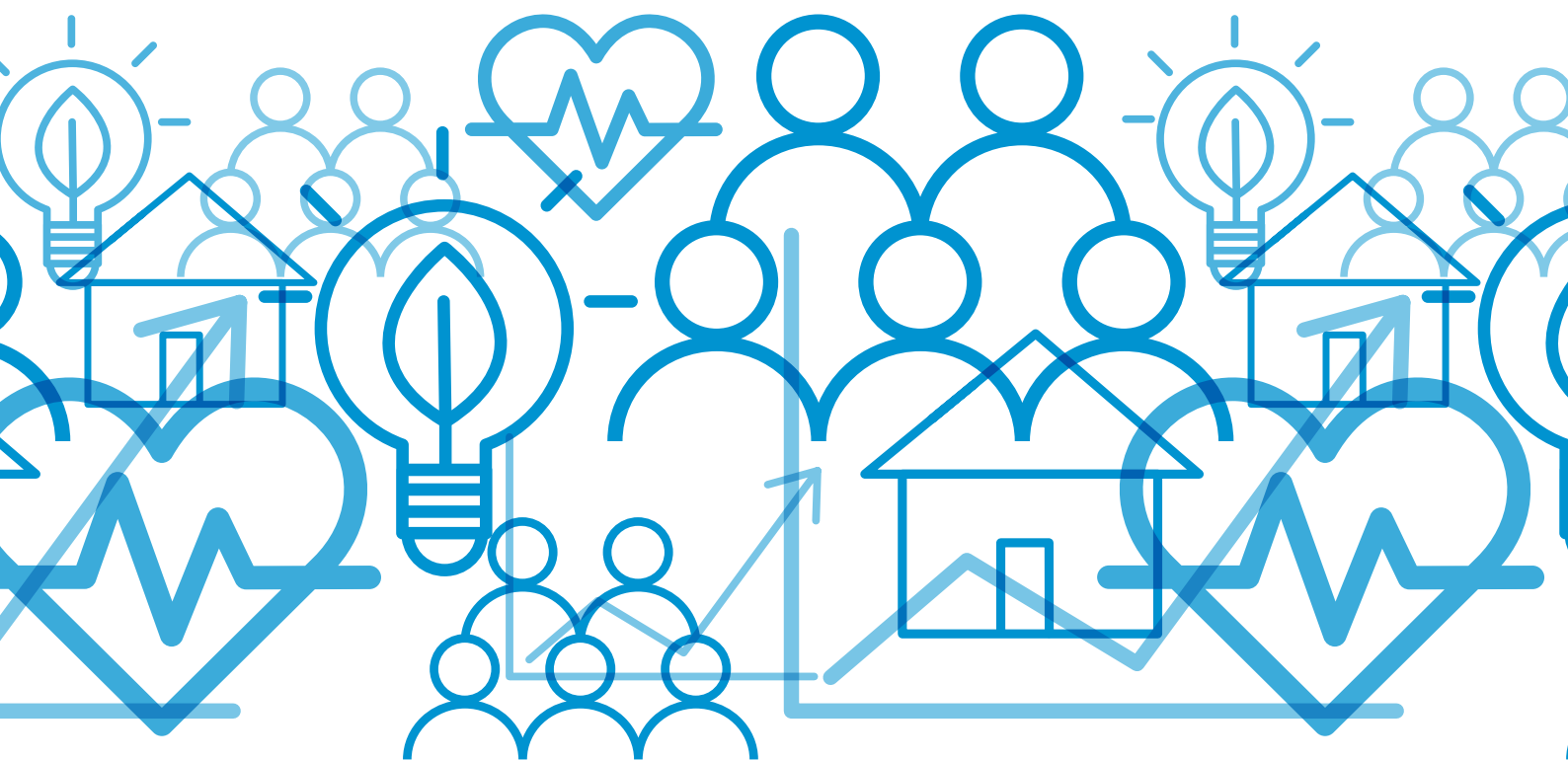


REBUILDING THE ROAD TO VICTORY

THE LGA CONSERVATIVE GROUP
PLAN FOR ELECTIONS IN 2024/2025



INTRODUCTION

There is no question that when it comes to the core principles of opportunity, equality, low tax, aspiration and good financial delivery only Conservative councils and councillors have the knowledge, experience and track record to improve the lives of the people we serve.

The past twelve months have been challenging at the ballot box and not helped by the national political scene. We have lost excellent Conservative councillors – through no fault of their own – who have worked hard for their communities.

We are going to get them back and increase our numbers.

We will achieve this by operating as one Conservative Family, fighting elections as one, whatever part of the country we come from. This will be done by reinforcing the core principles we all believe in and recapturing the ground that our residents know very well: that if you believe in well run services, offering best value without hiking up council taxes, then you need to vote Conservative.

Your new LGA Conservative Group Executive recently met to discuss and plan the way ahead for the next year. We are all councillors, just like you, and we represent all tiers of local government.

We hope that you find this document helpful and as the basis to Rebuild our Road to Victory.

If we campaign as one family, if we speak as one family, if we act as one family, then we shall win as a family!



Cllr Kevin Bentley

Leader, LGA Conservative Group



Cllr Abi Brown

Deputy Leader, LGA Conservative Group

YOUR LGA CONSERVATIVE GROUP EXECUTIVE 2023/24



Cllr Kevin Bentley

Group Leader

Essex County Council



Cllr Abi Brown

Deputy Group Leader

Stoke-on-Trent City Council



Cllr Rory Love OBE

County Council Rep

Kent County Council



Cllr John Fuller OBE

Non-Met District Council
Rep

South Norfolk District Council



**Cllr Baroness O'Neill
of Bexley OBE**

London Councils Rep

London Borough of Bexley



Cllr Antony Mullen

Metropolitan District
Councils Rep

Sunderland City Council



Cllr Linda Taylor

Unitary Councils Rep

Cornwall Council

YOUR LGA CONSERVATIVE GROUP EXECUTIVE 2023/24

'At Large' Executive Members



Cllr Kelham Cooke Group Comms and PR Lincolnshire County Council



Cllr David Fothergill Board Chair/Lead
Convener Somerset Council



Cllr Joanne Laban Executive Campaign Lead London Borough of Enfield



Cllr Colin Noble Manifesto Co-ordinator Suffolk County Council

National Lead Peer



Cllr William Nunn Breckland District Council/
Norfolk County Council

Ex officio – Chairman of the Conservative Councillors' Association



Cllr Philip Broadhead Bournemouth, Christchurch
and Poole Council

Invited to attend Group Executive meetings



Cllr Tim Oliver Chair, CCN Surrey County Council



**Cllr Sam
Chapman-Allan** Chair, DCN Breckland District Council

OUR CONSERVATIVE FAMILY CORE PRINCIPLES

And our constant pledge to people: we're on your side!

- Keeping Council Tax low
- Supporting the most vulnerable
- Protecting our environment
- Providing best value and first-class services
- Getting roads fixed for hardworking people.



When Conservatives work together as one family, we can achieve great things for the communities we serve.

Cllr Kevin Bentley
Group Leader, LGA Conservative Group



A white handwritten signature of Kevin Bentley on a blue background.

HOW WE MAKE THE LGA EFFECTIVE WITH THE GOVERNMENT

It is critical that the Local Government Association (LGA) maintains an excellent relationship with our Secretary of State, Ministers, DLUHC and Government as a whole. We all have personal contacts, and these are being mapped out by our Group Office so we can ensure we all maximise those relationships for the benefit of our Conservative Family.

It is also vital that the way we operate as a Group within the LGA is sharp, focussed and works towards increasing our numbers going forward. It is also important that we simply don't keep asking for money without providing real workable solutions. Local government faces huge financial pressures, some of them new ones, and while it is important the Government understands that councils do not have a bottomless pit of cash, we also need to work with our Ministers to find joint solutions.

Therefore, we will be introducing some new initiatives as well as returning to some good working practices.

- As a **Group Executive** we shall meet around the country, not just in London. At every location we shall invite the Conservative Group Leader and our councillors. We are your Executive, and it is important you have access to us other than just through emails and Teams calls.



- The **Leader and Deputy Leader** will hold regular meetings with our Board Chairs and Leads to ensure a two-way flow of information and keep us all joined-up. These will be co-ordinated by Cllr David Fothergill and will ensure that the Conservative message is maintained throughout all our Board work. Key information will be compiled and fed back to all of our group leaders across the country.
- Many of our number are now in opposition, which requires different skills. We shall therefore organise sessions for **new opposition leaders** to ensure that we hone our skills and prepare to take back control of the councils that we have lost.
- We will **share best practice** information amongst ourselves; no one has a monopoly on good ideas and we shall ensure that everyone in our family benefits from our collective knowledge.
- We will compile and update a list of all **Conservative Parliamentary candidates** and ensure they are regularly updated on our work at the LGA.
- Except for emergencies, all those who are appointed to the **Councillors' Forum** from our group will be encouraged to attend in person. These events used to be standing room only and would attract top government ministers and speakers. In a post-COVID world we need to get back to this as it will also increase our feeling of 'one family.' It will also set us apart from other groups if we are the largest contingent in the room!



WHAT WE WANT OUR GOVERNMENT TO PLEDGE AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION

As your Executive we are working on our manifesto asks to our national party. This has involved group leaders across the country and is led by Cllr Colin Noble and Kyle Evans from our Group Office.

After much deliberation and feedback from you, here are the main areas we want our party to focus on at the next general election. It is vital that we recapture the public mood and ensure that we are doing things that are important to them, whilst also having a clear mandate to lead. Here are our manifesto asks to the Government:

- **Give powers to local authorities to set licensing fees locally**, to be determined by local councillors. This will build capacity in licensing departments and support the night-time economy.
- **Provide our highway departments with five yearly funding allocations rather than yearly**. This will provide highway departments with more certainty so they can plan ahead better.
- **Remove the caps on council tax** (mirroring the existing arrangements for parish councils) which will allow councillors to be held accountable for their decisions on taxation at the ballot box. This recommendation if adopted would highlight to government just how financially prudent Conservative councils can be.
- **Prioritise a legislative agenda around flexibility** and powers to require high street banks to come together to create banking hubs in our communities.
- **Devolve the powers to set fines for fly-tipping, littering and graffiti** directly to local authorities. This will allow councils to set fines at a rate which not only seeks to cover the costs incurred by the local authority to clear fly-tipping, littering and graffiti, but also to make a profit.
- **Provide councils with maximum freedom over the use of Apprenticeship Levy funds** to help address workforce challenges and create the green jobs of the future. Such powers should include the ability for councils to pool these funds more effectively to meet the needs of their local areas.

- **Consider our view that future NHS GP and dentistry contracts should include a duty to cooperate** to deal with future housing growth, with powers given to integrated care boards (ICBs) to issue remedial notices where providers fail to deal with housing growth in their areas.
- Introduce legislation to **allow a royal commission to consider the future of leisure and sport provision** by local authorities.
- **Bring exempt accommodation into the planning system**, to give local authorities the power to control their spread and prevent the loss of much-needed family housing.
- **Give local authorities the ability to set planning fees locally** at levels which reflect local demand and allow them to speed up the planning applications process.
- **Allow social housing rents to be set locally**, determined by councillors, to ensure that the Housing Revenue Account has the long-term financial sustainability which enables councils to invest in social housing.
- **Make 100 per cent ‘right to buy’ receipt collection permanent** to give councils a powerful arm to build more social housing.
- **Adopt the LGA’s Work Local model** to empower local leaders to increase employment levels in communities.
- To support emerging technology that reduces the workforce pressures on adult social care, **issue tax breaks to businesses who create the innovative solutions needed to ease the pressures in adult social care.**



HOW WE WILL RUN OUR PEER TEAM GOING FORWARD

We want to strengthen our peer team and the way we operate to demonstrate to Government that we are the right people to work with Conservative councils and councillors and ensure support, experience and knowledge is shared to provide even better services to our residents.

Therefore, our new National Lead Peer, Cllr William Nunn, will take charge of reshaping and recruiting our excellent peer team with the following actions:

- All members of the Group Executive will be trained peers.
- On the basis that we all need to continually improve our skills and learning, all existing peers will be requested to undergo a simple reassessment process to ensure quality and appropriate new skills are learnt. Our Group Leader will be the first to go through this process, followed by the rest of the Executive. All of our 120 current peers will go through the same simple and effective process.
- We will proactively encourage new people to apply to become peers to attract a broad range of talent and skills, and regional lead peers will assist with talent spotting.
- We will look to introduce some formal accreditation/certificate for those who are peers.
- The National Lead Peer will approve the use of non-peers for urgent peer work and will notify the Group Leader accordingly.
- We will encourage peers to shadow other peers/peer work.
- Cllr William Nunn will have regular meetings of regional lead peers.
- Prospective peers will be interviewed by the Group Executive as the final part of the accreditation process.

Creating high performing peer teams

- Regular meetings of national and regional lead peers to update on our team performance.
- Proactive support for group leaders.
- Develop support networks via the regional lead peers.
- Regular training to ensure we provide the right guidance and advice to our councils.
- Dedicated training for mentor peers.

OFLOG AND BVI INSPECTIONS

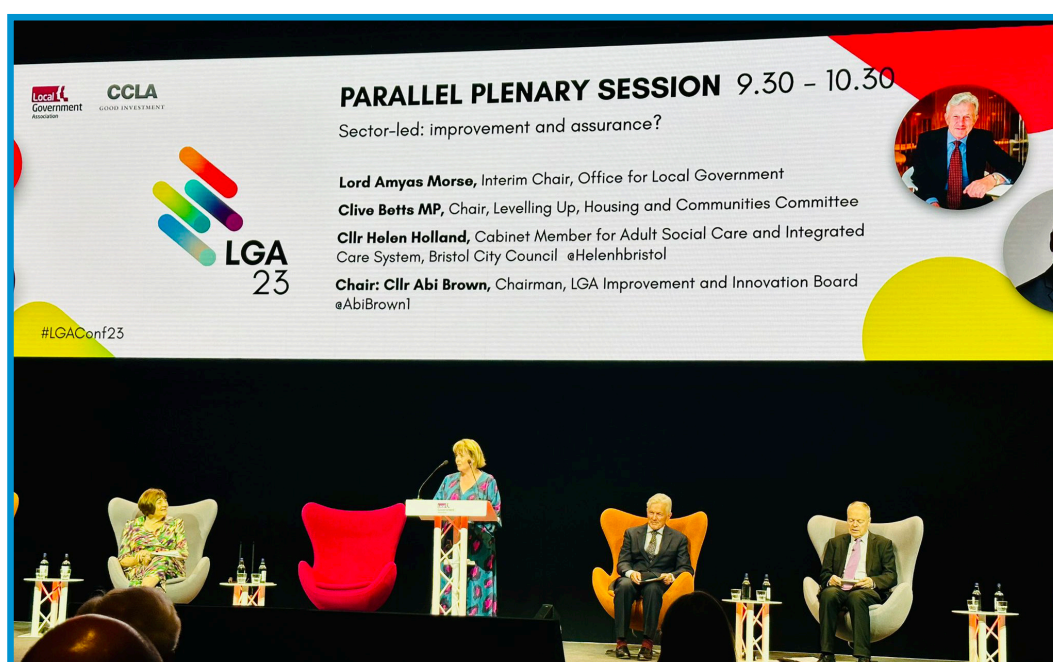
The Secretary of State has been very clear that the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) is here to stay and will be used to assist in the delivery of best value within the sector. It is fair to say that there is healthy scepticism amongst councillors, but it is vital that we ensure that this works, and that it works in a way that we contribute to and lead.

Therefore, as your Group Executive, we shall work with Government Ministers and our own membership to take that lead and ensure that OFLOG becomes something that we are proud of and which upholds the high standards that we know Conservative local government operates under.

We are seeing an increase in the number of interventions across the country; we need to rise to the challenge and ensure that we offer assistance and professional help to prevent and/or support challenged councils. We would like to see OFLOG work with us to: formalise a 'menu' of intervention; ensure the professionalism of commissioners; and ensure that our peers have the right training to be part of any prevention inspections or, where needed, interventions.

Here is our plan to make OFLOG a success for us:

- Our Group Office will provide a constantly updated list of Conservative councils that have not had a Corporate Peer Challenge. This is important to prove to Government that we are on top of our game and that the Conservative family is helping colleagues in relation to any issues that they face.



- We shall invite the OFLOG Chair, Lord Morse, to attend a group meeting to share our plans and hear how he intends to work with us in the future.
- We will work to shape the political board with OFLOG so that the local government sector has influence over the work of the Office. Our new approach to peer selection and training will ensure our seriousness in relation to the assessment of councils going forward.
- We will work to support the seven principles of best value:
 - local accountability
 - continuous improvement
 - openness to challenge and support
 - expectations
 - prevention
 - meeting the costs of failure
 - default commissioner powers and de-escalation.
- The above will be underpinned by the themes of:
 - continuous improvement
 - leadership
 - governance
 - culture
 - use of resources
 - service delivery
 - partnership and community engagement.



HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER AND EXTERNALLY

Communication is without doubt one of the most important things we do, perception being 90% of reality for many people, whether colleagues or the public. What people think about us is part of the communications plan and should always be at the forefront of everything we attempt or achieve.

We are going to improve the communications that you receive from the Group Executive, and also, crucially, how you can communicate with us.

You have already started to see this via the DLUHC WhatsApp as well as the regular bulletins we put out to all Conservative councillors.

We will work closely with our CCA colleagues, under the leadership of Cllr Philip Broadhead, to ensure we are directly communicating with all Conservative councillors, as well as our colleagues in the County Councils' Network and the District Councils' Network via Cllr Tim Oliver and Sam Chapman-Allen.

We are all one Conservative family with one common aim.

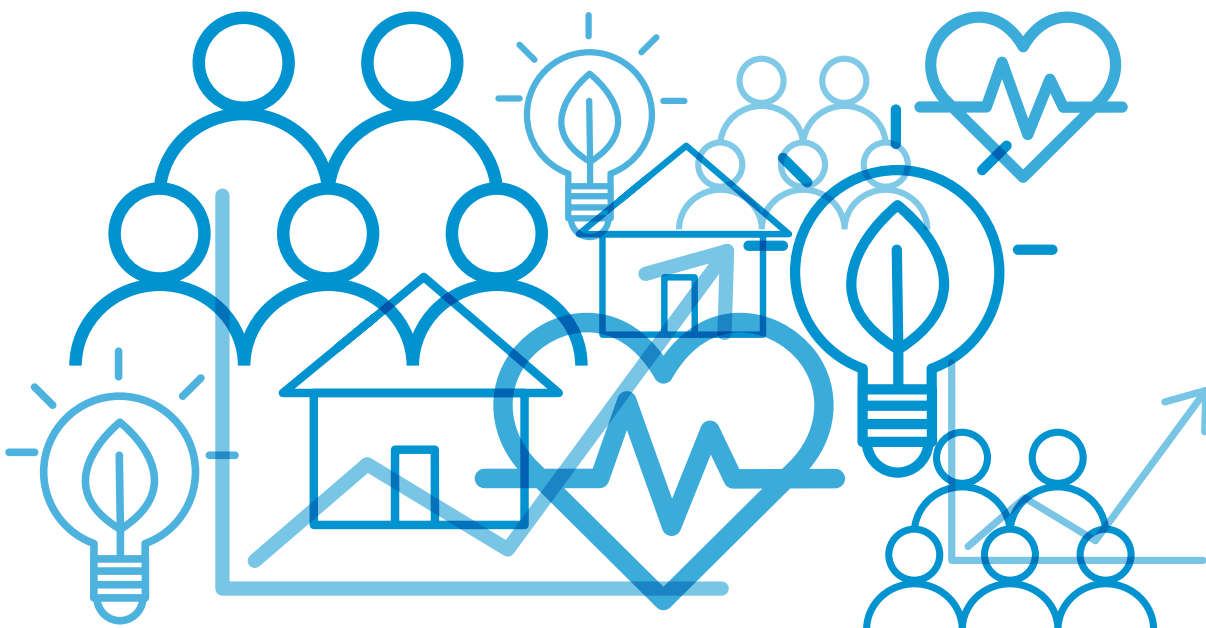


So, here are some actions to ensure our communications are frequent and meaningful:

- All Group Executive members to be added to the DLUHC WhatsApp so everyone can see the conversations whilst also updating group leaders on a frequent basis.
- Group Executive members will produce regular videos to support communication with members on issues we are dealing with as well as more medium- and long-term work that is important to you.
- We shall alert councillors when there is LGA Conservative Group activity on national issues.
- We shall post news releases to all Conservative councillors.
- We shall have regular updates on our social media outlets.

Cllr Kelham Cooke will oversee the comms and PR output for the Group Executive, working alongside our colleagues in the Group Office.

We are one family, with a common cause and a united message. This way we will win, and it will be a major part of our Rebuilding the Road to Victory!



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