

first

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the magazine for local government

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“Local authorities could do an awful lot **if they had greater freedom to borrow to invest**”

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Until everyone understands

Editorial

LGA statement on delayed transfers of care

The LGA has been lobbying hard against threats to withhold social care money from councils.

We know that in some areas, more can be done, and where this is the case, the LGA wants to be involved in helping those councils where delayed transfers of care (DTOCs) are an issue.

But we all need to work together – government, NHS and councils – to give support and share best practice.

Councils are committed to getting people out of hospital – quickly and safely – and back into the community near to their family and friends. We have always maintained that local government needs to be given the freedom and flexibility to invest in social care where it is most needed, and where it is most effective.

Councils want to tackle the root cause of the problem and keep people out of hospital in the first place, as well as helping patients get out of a hospital bed and back into the community.

The LGA's Chairman, Lord Porter, has met Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Health, and Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, while LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd has written to and is meeting NHS England's Chief Executive, Simon Stevens, to raise the concerns of our members.

The LGA has also been in close and regular discussion with officials at all levels of government about the issues this is causing for councils. In these conversations with government, the LGA has been defending those councils that are making good progress in reducing DTOCs but are getting unfairly branded as poor performers.

Despite this, government chose not



to listen to our advice that urged against sending out letters to councils threatening a review of funding.

We were also clear in our disappointment at government issuing the letters, which we described in the national media as “hugely unhelpful”.

In the cases of those who are struggling to reduce DTOCs, the LGA is keen to share best practice through its sector-led improvement programme.

The LGA will continue to make the case of its members to government, and will be emphasising that threatening to take money away from cash-strapped councils will damage their ability to plan and deliver vital social care services, just as we enter what is predicted to be a difficult winter ahead.

Rather than more finger pointing, councils just want to get on with the job of helping people in need. The only way forward in tackling the current health and social care crisis is for everyone involved to work together.

Number of homeless older people rising

The LGA is warning of a “ticking time bomb” in the number of older homeless people, after the latest figures showed an alarming rise of 130 per cent since its lowest point eight years ago.

The figures show that between April and June this year, councils accepted 620 people aged more than 60 as homeless – a rate of nearly 10 a day – and this figure is set to double by 2025. It is up from the 270 accepted between October and December 2009, which was the lowest number since records began in 2005.

In a new report, ‘The impact of homelessness on health’, the LGA says that older homeless people are presenting to councils with a range of complex health conditions, which is creating significant extra pressures for councils in housing and social care.

Physical and mental health problems, alcohol abuse and gambling problems are contributory factors in later-life homelessness, along with the death of a close relative, relationship breakdown, accommodation being sold or needing repair, and rent arrears.

Councils often cite rapidly increasing rents and stagnating household incomes as key factors driving the increase. Older people experiencing homelessness are also more likely to suffer from mental illness or depression.

The LGA is calling for government to address the undersupply in specialist housing for older people, and to adapt the implementation of welfare reforms to reduce the risk of homelessness.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: “Homelessness is not just a housing issue. Homelessness and ill-health are intrinsically linked, and this is especially evident in elderly people.

“Councils want to end homelessness by preventing it happening in the first place. We need government to allow councils to build affordable homes and to adapt welfare reforms to ensure housing remains affordable for low-income families.”

‘The impact of homelessness on health’ is available at www.local.gov.uk/publications



PM roundtable addresses housing challenge

LGA Chairman Lord Porter and Chief Executive Mark Lloyd were among the attendees at a recent housing roundtable chaired by Prime Minister Theresa May, to discuss plans to boost the supply of new homes.

The Prime Minister outlined her plans to increase housing supply and the need for developers, big and small, local authorities and housing associations to all step up and play their part.

A Number 10 spokesperson said it “was a positive and collaborative meeting, which needs to signal a step change in house building if we are to build a country that truly works for everyone”.

Lord Porter said: “It was encouraging that everyone around the table agreed with us about the important role councils must play, and pleasing that the Prime Minister is taking personal ownership of the challenge.

“Councils want to get on with the job of building new homes that people in their areas desperately need, and are already playing their part by approving nine out of 10 planning applications.

“We now hope to see positive action taken by the Government in the Autumn

Budget to spark the genuine renaissance in council house building we desperately need.

“This includes the lifting of the housing borrowing cap to allow councils to invest in building new affordable homes, enabling councils to keep 100 per cent of receipts from any homes they sell, and ensuring planning departments can be adequately funded so that they can cover the cost of processing applications.”

The meeting followed the announcement by the Prime Minister at the Conservative party conference of an additional £2 billion for affordable housing, with local authorities and housing associations encouraged to bid for money from the new funding pot. The Government said the £2 billion could fund 25,000 homes for social rent by 2021.

Lord Porter added: “We hope the Prime Minister’s speech signalled an important shift in the Government’s housing vision and are pleased that there will be additional funding for affordable homes.

“It is good that the Government has accepted our argument that councils must be part of the solution to our chronic housing shortage and able to resume their historic role as a major builder of affordable homes.”

Homes ‘cost eight times average wage’

The average house is now worth 7.72 times the average wage, compared with just 3.96 times the average income in 2000, according to new LGA analysis.

Predictably, the most expensive region of the country to buy a house is London, where the average house is almost 12 times the average salary. In the South East, the average house is nearly 10 times the average wage packet, and in the East of England and the South West, it is almost nine times.

The North East is the region with the closest gap between house prices and wages, but homes are still more than five times the average income – a formidable challenge to any individual or couple looking to realise their dream of a home of their own.

With house prices rising by nearly a fifth in the last decade, according to government figures, many people are caught between the instability and expense of renting, and trying to climb onto a property ladder where – in the cheapest region in the country – a 20 per cent deposit may well be their total earnings for an entire year.

As part of its submission to the Autumn Budget, the LGA has called for an urgent investment in house building and infrastructure, to deliver the genuinely affordable homes needed.

The last time the country built the amount of new homes a year it needs was in the 1970s, when 40 per cent were built by local authorities. Last year, councils lost more homes through the Right to Buy scheme than were started in the last five years.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA’s Housing Spokesman, said: “When house prices are almost eight times the average income, it’s clear that we have a serious shortage of affordable homes, which is shattering the dream of home-ownership for too many people.

“Families around the country desperately need more affordable homes and more routes into home ownership. A model of Right to Buy that actually allows councils to build more homes would vastly increase the opportunities for these families. Without it, the scheme will grind to a halt.”

news in brief

Membership survey

The LGA wants to know what you – its members – think of the work it is doing on your behalf, to help inform its future plans. It has commissioned BMG Research to undertake its annual ‘perceptions’ survey, and is urging councillors approached by researchers to share their views on the LGA’s offer and current provision, communications and methods of engagement, and the support offered to member councils via sector-led improvement. The survey will only take around 15 minutes to complete and will run until mid-December. Please contact vicky.clarke@bmgresearch.co.uk or telephone 0121 333 6006 to book an appointment. If you have any queries about this research, please email kate.cooper@local.gov.uk

Libraries week

Councils around the country used last month’s first annual Libraries Week to demonstrate how libraries are playing an increasingly important role as community hubs – providing a wide variety of services from homework clubs to public health clinics and business advice centres. Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA’s Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: “Our libraries were visited 250 million times in 2016/17 – more than visits to Premier League football games, the cinema, and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined. There is a fantastic amount of creativity and ambition among library staff, councils and their communities to make the very best of resources.”

Audit role

The independent company set up by the LGA to deliver cost-effective audit is looking for a serving councillor to join its board as a non-executive director. Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd is responsible for appointing auditors to local public bodies, including most councils, fire and rescue authorities and police bodies, and setting audit fees. Candidates need to be able to commit 15 to 20 days a year for an initial three years. Annual remuneration is £8,000. Applications close on 5 November. For more information, please visit www.wig.co.uk/career/non-executive-director-1.html

‘Use rising motoring taxes to improve local roads’

More than £400 million extra each year could be spent by councils on improving local roads if government funding reflected rising income from fuel and motoring taxes, the LGA has said.

Nearly 8.5 million more vehicles are on the road now compared to 2000, adding to congestion and road maintenance issues, such as potholes, wear-down of road markings, and increasing wear and tear.

New LGA analysis shows that if the Government matched the increase in fuel and motoring tax income generated in the last 10 years, town halls would have an extra £418 million to spend on local roads.

This would help them reduce congestion, improve air quality, contribute towards tackling the country’s £12 billion road repairs backlog and encourage residents to use alternative transport where possible.

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, the LGA is also calling for the Government to fully fund the statutory concessionary bus fares scheme, which councils are subsidising by at least £200 million a year.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Transport Spokesman, said: “The vast majority of journeys start or end on a local road. The impact of almost 30 per cent more vehicles cannot be over-stated. Congestion, wear and tear, and air quality are all affected. It’s no wonder our local roads are facing a growing congestion crunch. It would take £12 billion and a decade to clear the nation’s road repair backlog.



“Councils are doing all they can to provide their communities with the transport services they need, to manage and ensure that roads are as free-flowing as possible.

“The Government needs to develop a fully funded plan to help councils deliver the desperately-needed local road improvements we need. This should include matching the extra growth in tax take with the funding it provides councils.

“This would see councils given an extra £400 million a year to spend on filling potholes, easing congestion and protecting vital bus routes. Only with long-term funding can councils deliver roads truly fit for the 21st century.”

‘More cash needed for cyber security’

More funding is needed by councils to ensure their computer systems, infrastructure and the personal data they collect and manage remains protected from crippling cyber attacks, the LGA has urged.

Latest industry figures show that UK businesses were subjected to nearly 65,000 cyber attacks – more than 700 every day – in the three months of April to June 2017, a rise of 52 per cent on the first quarter of 2017.

With councils making more local public services available digitally, getting more of their workforce online and planning greater collaboration and integration work with partner organisations – which requires the sharing of residents’ and business customers’ data – reviewing and reinforcing current cyber security arrangements is a key priority for local authorities. The LGA is leading on a bid to government for funding for councils and local partner organisations to increase their collective capacity to respond to increasingly hostile cyber attacks.

Cllr Paul Bettison, Chairman of the LGA’s Improvement and Innovation Board, said: “Councils need to ensure confidential information is protected as securely as possible from the rising number of cyber attacks which can bring businesses to their knees, by putting their IT services out of action for days and compromising personal data.

“Investing in cyber security must be seen as an economic opportunity and we urge government to allocate funding to councils to build capacity to respond to the growing threat of cyber attacks and ensure the safeguarding of personal data is as strong as possible.”

'Record numbers of children in care'

Ninety children a day entered care last year with a record number now in the care system, the LGA has revealed.

Official figures show the total number of looked after children reached a new high of 72,670 in 2016/17 – up from 70,440 the year before.

This also represents the biggest annual rise in children in care in seven years, and is adding to the financial pressures facing stretched children's services.

The figures highlight the urgent need for the Chancellor to use his Autumn Budget on 22 November to address the £2 billion funding gap facing children's services by 2020, according to the LGA. This is the only way to ensure children and families are able to get the support they need, when they need it, to avoid children having to go into care wherever possible.

The reality is that without action, the number of children coming into care will continue to rise and councils will find it even harder to support them and their families.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Children's services are at a tipping point, with growing demand for support combining



with ongoing council funding pressures to become unsustainable.

"Last year saw the biggest rise in the number of children in care for seven years. With 90 children coming into care every day, our calls for urgent funding to support these children and invest in children and their families are becoming increasingly urgent."

He added: "Children's services face a £2 billion funding gap by 2020. If nothing is done to address this funding gap, crucial services that many children and families across the country desperately rely on will be put at risk. We are calling on the Government to use the Autumn Budget to commit to fully funding children's services and invest in improving services to ensure vulnerable children get the appropriate support and protection they need."

i The LGA has launched **Bright Futures**, a new campaign calling for the services that change children's lives to be properly funded. See p12 or visit www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures to find out more

Youth custody safety concerns

Action is urgently needed to make sure children and young people detained in youth offending institutions and secure training centres are safe, the LGA has said.

It has called on the Government to publish a clear action plan to improve conditions in youth custody, following alarming evidence that institutions are dangerously unsafe for young people.

In July, a damning report from Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons found that not a single establishment inspected in England and Wales was safe to hold children and young people, and warned that current conditions made a future tragedy "inevitable".

In just five years, the number of children and young people self-harming had more than doubled, with incidents running at 8.9 per 100 children compared with 4.1 in 2011. Assault rates were 18.9 per 100 children, compared with 9.7 in 2011.

Councils have a statutory duty to ensure all children and young people in their area are safe, but their powers are limited when

children and young people enter custody. Responsibility for youth offending institutions lies with the Youth Custody Service, based with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "There is no other situation in which children and young people would be placed into environments that are known to be unsafe.

"Any local authority found to be running institutions where tragedy is "inevitable" would quite rightly be under intense pressure and would at the very least be required to produce a plan with clear timescales for action to ensure that improvements are made quickly.

"HMPPS was made aware of these issues in July, yet we still have no clear idea of what action will be taken, and by when. This situation would not be acceptable for local authorities, schools or any other public institution charged with the care of children, and it should not be acceptable for HMPPS."

Social care budgets and standards

More than half of councils will overspend their adult social care budgets this year, according to a recent survey by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "The findings of ADASS's survey reinforce sector-wide warnings that social care faces a perfect storm and is a reminder of the perilous state of the provider market.

"It is also notable that nearly half of respondents do not think targets around delayed transfers of care are realistic. The survey underlines the urgent need to resolve the short and long-term future of care and it is vital that government sets out how it plans to address this in the upcoming Autumn Budget."

Meanwhile, the majority of adult social care services have been rated good by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), in its annual assessment of the quality of health and social care in England.

Responding to the CQC's 'State of care' report, Cllr Seccombe, said: "It is encouraging that the vast majority of adult social care services were rated good, and that services have improved on last year, which is a massive achievement given the unprecedented pressures across the system.

"The CQC report is yet another timely warning, from a key part of the sector, of the need to resolve the future of care as an urgent priority."



NATIONAL BID

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

SURVEY 2017

British BIDs launched the National BID Survey last month at The National BIDs Conference in Cambridge

The research plays an important part in understanding the current BID landscape and offers the opportunity to gain an insight into how BID models are evolving and developing across the UK

This latest survey shows a story of growth and success and is strong evidence of the business community working together to develop strategically.

The active BID community totals 283 BIDs (correct at time of research in August 2017), with an average of 25 new BIDs having come into existence each year since 2012. There are more than 50 new and renewal ballots taking place each year. Interestingly, the research also shows that 105 of the 126 BIDs surveyed had local authority representation on their boards.

Both central and local government have a keen interest in BIDs, and the emerging role of Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) and executive mayors has led to some new questions this year – on relationships with both LEPs, and with local authorities. Many are still keen to have the global figures on the amounts BIDs invest in local economies through their levy and other spending.

Letters

Brexit border control concerns

Councils should press government for urgent upgrades of border controls for passengers and freight at UK ports and airports in advance of Brexit.

South East local authorities are calling for action to address potential extra burdens for councils and how these would be funded. Burdens could include more port health inspections and major traffic congestion caused by increased border inspections. Clarity is needed on any changes in free trade agreements as these could substantially increase councils' port health responsibilities if inspection of foods from the EU is required, post-Brexit.

Government should also explore options for a freight system – similar to that used on the US/ Mexico border – to avoid long delays that create traffic congestion, disrupt supply chains and damage the economy. If trusted freight companies can pre-register details on what is being carried and who is driving, trucks could enter the UK without additional processing – reducing delays and focusing staff time on non-registered vehicles.

For passengers, upgraded and tested e-borders systems are needed before Brexit to speed up processing and avoid lengthy queues at ports and airports that damage UK businesses and tourism. There is also potential for better use of Advance Passenger Information to identify potentially high-risk individuals.

In the South East, we also want assurances that border controls will remain in France for passengers and vehicles inbound to Dover Port and the Channel Tunnel. Repatriating incoming borders would require significant investment in land and infrastructure to carry out checks on UK soil.

Cllr Nicolas Heslop (Con), Chairman of South East England Councils

● The LGA is holding a Smith Square Debate on Brexit on 5 December. See www.local.gov.uk/events

Community projects

Newcastle's Kenton ward was one of 12 neighbourhoods across the country to have been chosen by the Government to take part in its 'Our Place' programme. With a budget of £78,000, Our Place is putting the Kenton community at the heart of decision-making. Groups of residents have come together to decide what the priorities are and how the fund should be spent. They felt that as Kenton has an ageing population, with more than 3,000 residents aged over 50, a key focus should be on health and wellbeing.

A number of bodies have been funded to carry out projects of social value. For instance, a £25,000 grant has been given to the Kenton Park Community Association to help develop sports and leisure activities for men and women. A 'trips and falls' project led by Age Newcastle will be rolled out across the ward to meet the needs of 1,402 residents aged more than 65.

And the council's Welfare Rights Service is working with doctors' surgeries to target residents aged over 80 who may be missing out on benefits such as pension credit or health-related attendance allowance. So far, Kenton residents have claimed an extra £16,899 worth of annualised benefits.

With budgets stretched, it's good that a range of community projects for the over-50s can be supported, following consultation with residents. Each in their own way will help to enhance the health and wellbeing of old folk.

Cllr Stephen Lambert (Lab), **Cllr Ged Bell (Lab)**, and **Cllr Jane Streater (Lab)**, Newcastle City Council

sound bites

Cllr Claire Hiscott (Con, Bristol)

"Good to hear #children's Minister Robert Goodwill MP at #NCASC2017 this am. Dept in listening mode re: LA funding & early intervention needs."

www.twitter.com/ClaireHiscott

Cllr Liam Walker (Con, Oxfordshire)

"A brilliant morning in North Leigh clearing an overgrown footpath – thank you to everyone who came along to help! #CommunityAction."

www.twitter.com/_Liam_Walker_

Cllr Warren Morgan (Lab, Brighton & Hove)

"Delighted our Living Wage Joint Venture w/@HydeHousing providing 1,000 truly affordable homes in #Brighton and #Hove just got final approval!"

www.twitter.com/warrenmorgan

Cllr Steve Morphew (Lab, Norfolk)

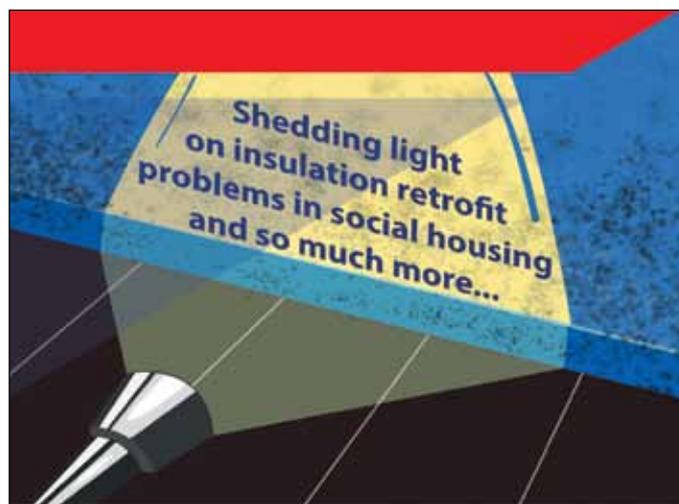
"Labour's Norfolk manifesto 2017 proposed Carers Charter on employment rights for carers, support for young carers from their education institutions & support in community to tackle social isolation. Council today agreed a commission to produce a Charter."

www.twitter.com/SteveMorphew

Cllr Craig Martin (Lib Dem, Durham)

"Spent the evening discussing plans to improve Chester-le-Street, couldn't help but enjoy a pint in one of its fine pubs afterwards."

www.twitter.com/cmartinLD



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What do you think? Please submit letters for publication by emailing first@local.gov.uk. Letters may be edited and published online

features

Budget soundings

Local services face a funding gap of £5.8bn by 2019/20. The LGA's Budget submission sets out the urgent need for fair funding for councils

English councils will have had to deal with £16 billion of reductions to government grant funding by the end of this decade. From April 2019, 168 councils will not receive any core central government funding and will have to contribute funding to the Government instead.

The LGA's submission to the Autumn Budget sets out the urgent need for the Chancellor to ensure fair funding for local government, take forward the further devolution of business rates and announce key policies to allow councils to support their residents and communities.

In our submission, we detail the unfunded cost pressures facing local government and why – with local services facing a funding gap of at least £5.8 billion by the end of the decade – it is vital that the Budget recognises that councils cannot continue without sufficient and sustainable resources.

Children's services, adult social care and homelessness are at a tipping point. Children's social care, in particular, is becoming the biggest area of financial challenge for social care authorities.

Councils are facing additional costs, such as those arising from the National Living Wage, paying for sleep-in carers, and the unexpected, but essential, costs of replacing cladding on high-rise flats, following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Our submission sets out how – with the right funding and powers – councils can continue to lead their local areas while the Government gets on with negotiating the UK's exit from the European Union.

To do this, the Budget must bring forward proposals that give councils the powers and fiscal incentives they need to build their local economies. With this approach, central

and local government can together help to improve residents' lives, reduce demand for services and save money for the taxpayer.

Our submission makes positive recommendations on a range of policy areas with the intention of empowering all parts of local government to deliver economic growth and high-quality public services. This includes much needed reforms to ensure the distribution of funding to councils is fair and transparent.

Dealing with the housing crisis is an urgent priority for both national and local government. The country needs to build many more homes to keep up with demand. New homes must be in the right locations, genuinely affordable for local residents, of a good quality and of the right type. They must be supported by adequate infrastructure and services, and delivered quickly.

The Budget is an ideal opportunity for the Government to announce key policies, such as providing a sustainable, long-term financial framework for councils to invest in new homes that will help us meet the needs of the nation.

A national, one-size-fits-all economic policy needs to be replaced by more local decision-making to produce resilient local economies and encourage growth that benefits everyone. This is why further devolution remains vital in empowering councils to join up public service investment locally while continuing to give dynamic leadership. To help achieve the country's aspirations to build the economy of the future, it is essential that the current



£8.4 billion of EU regional aid to local areas is replaced by a locally led successor programme. This money is vital to create jobs, support small and medium enterprises, deliver skills and boost local growth in all types of areas across the country.

Taken together, our proposals provide a road map to empower councils to get on with delivering the growth, services and support that residents tell us they want, while also supporting central government, businesses and charities in tackling the long-term structural problems that need immediate attention.

Whether it is building new homes, attracting inward investment, providing the skills our residents require or protecting the vulnerable, local government is best placed to provide leadership and positive action in all our communities.

A lack of funding for councils will have serious consequences in our communities, but with the right funding and powers, local government can play a vital role in supporting central government to deliver its ambitions for everyone in our country.



You can view the LGA's full Budget submission at www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses. See also p18 and p30



“It is vital that the Budget recognises that councils cannot continue without sufficient and sustainable resources”

LGA Budget submission: key proposals

- **Local government funding**
- Further retention of business rates should continue, but the extra income should go towards the £5.8 billion funding gap facing existing local services by 2019/20.
- The immediate £1.3 billion pressure to stabilise the adult social care provider market must be met today, either through further business rates retention or grant funding.
- Other unfunded pressures – such as the National Living Wage – should be met by the Government in full.
- Further retained income from business rates should come without any additional responsibilities.
- The Government’s Fair Funding Review should not result in any local authority seeing its funding reduce.
- The Government should work with local government to stamp out business rates avoidance.
- Council tax should be a truly local tax, with increased local control over discounts and referendum limits abolished.
- Councils should have full flexibility over local spending of the Apprenticeship Levy.
- The statutory concessionary bus fares scheme should be fully funded.
- **Reforming public services**
- The LGA is offering to host and facilitate a first round of national cross-party talks on the future of adult social care to help secure agreement on a way forward.
- The Government should cancel future reductions to public health grant and return funding that has been cut since April 2015.
- A proportion of the Department for Education’s £300 million budget for improvement and innovation in children’s services should be devolved to councils.
- Pay pressures in the fire and rescue service should be funded in full, alongside investment in new ways of working.
- The process for publishing statutory notices should be revised so that other, modern and financially viable communication channels can be used.
- **Inclusive economic growth**
- Councils should be provided with the financial flexibilities to build new homes by devolving funding, localising planning fees and removing the cap on borrowing.
- Growth funding pots should be joined up with funding based on place and led by councils and combined authorities.
- EU regeneration funding must be replaced with local areas able to set their own priorities.
- Powers and funding to better deliver growth through investment in transport, skills and employment support, housing and digital connectivity should be devolved to councils.
- Major economic development should be encouraged outside London.

Bright futures

The LGA has launched a new campaign calling on the Government to fully fund children's services

Making sure all children and young people can have the bright future they deserve is a key ambition of every council. If we want the best possible outcomes, children must be at the heart of everything we do – and councils are central to making this happen. But our children's services are under increasing pressure.

Councils are facing a £2 billion funding gap for children's services by 2020, and were forced to overspend on their children's services budgets by £605 million across England in 2015/16.

The Early Intervention Grant has also been significantly cut, by almost £500 million since 2013, and is projected to drop by a further £183 million by 2020.

Within these limitations, councils have worked hard to protect budgets for essential child protection services despite large reductions elsewhere. Many see improving

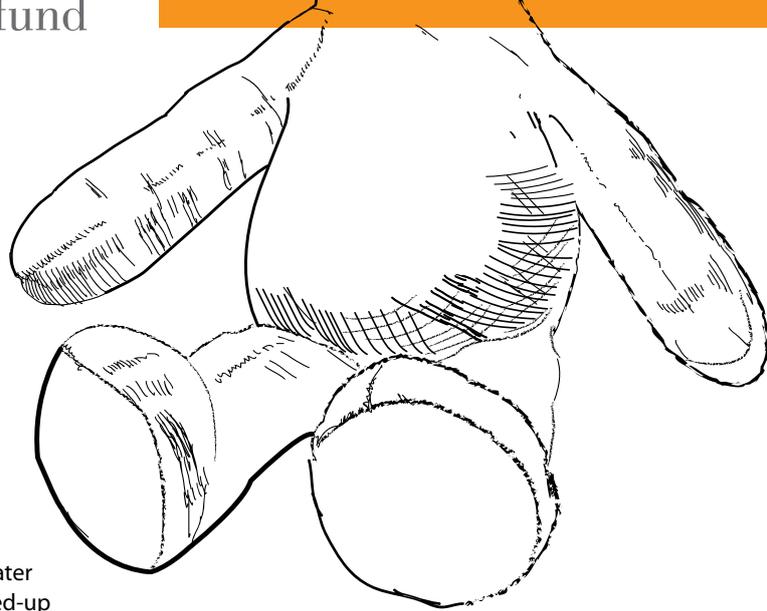
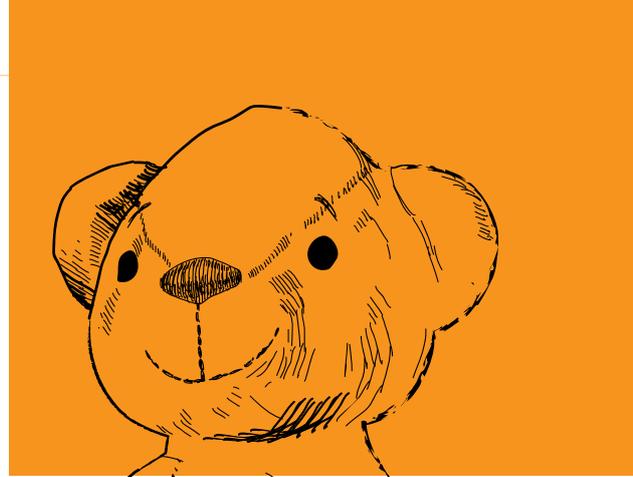
outcomes as a council-wide priority, looking carefully at the impact of wider economic and social policy on future life chances and encouraging all services to take a more child-centred approach.

A stronger move towards the devolution of powers from national to local government would give councils greater flexibility to design joined-up local services to meet the needs of children and families.

Just as a single service cannot make a difference on its own, neither can a single partner nor a single local area. Although councils shape services around the priorities of their local communities, they must do so within the wider policy and financial framework set by central government and delivered by numerous agencies.

To get the best for every child, we strongly believe that improved outcomes must become a golden thread that runs through all areas of public policy.

Councils currently face considerable challenges in delivering consistently high-quality services. Funding has been significantly reduced across the public sector, while the demand for services to support children in need has surged.



We cannot carry on like this. Our Bright Futures campaign sets out seven clear priorities for coordinated action across the public, community and voluntary sectors, which we believe will help drive the improvement necessary to offer the brightest future for children and families.

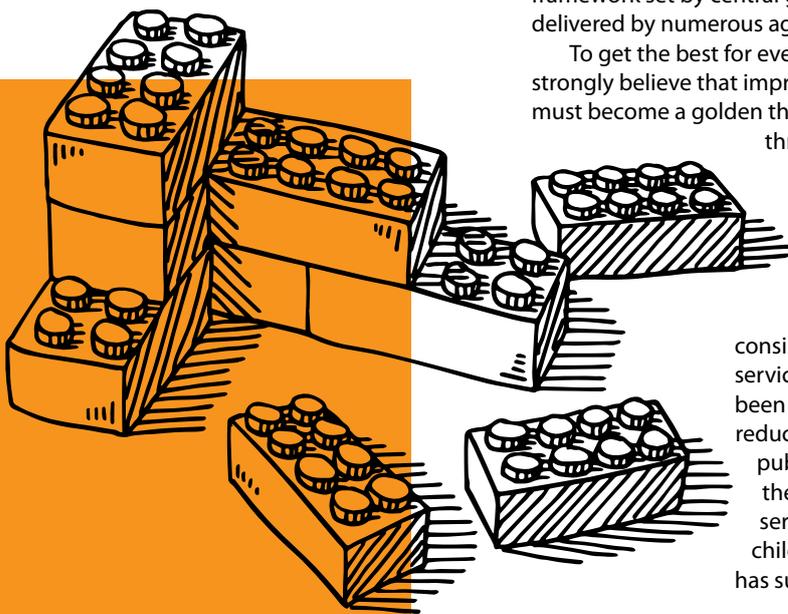
They are:

A stronger focus on outcomes for children

- All partners at a local and national level must keep a strong focus on the needs of children, young people and families.

Consistently strong local leadership

- National and local bodies must do more to nurture consistently strong local leadership for children's services at all levels.



This is a summary of the LGA's new campaign document, 'Bright futures: getting the best for children, young people and families', which can be downloaded for free at www.local.gov.uk/publications

A culture of continuous improvement

- Local and national government must work together to ensure that improved outcomes for children remain an ongoing priority, with improvement led by local government and subject to independent scrutiny.

The right support for children at the right time

- Stronger investment in early help is vital to ensure that children and families can access the support they need when they need it.

Sustainable funding to help children thrive

- Local and national government must ensure that sustainable funding is available and used effectively to provide the vital services that children, young people and their families rely on.

A better understanding of what works for children

- Local and national government must develop a better understanding of 'what works' and 'what good looks like' for children's services.

Strengthened morale and support for social workers

- Local and national government must do more to showcase the excellent work of social work teams across the country, and support councils to recruit and retain high quality social workers.

Taken together, we believe that this represents an ambitious plan, while at the same time recognising the challenges and actions we can take in response.

If we want to make sure every child and young person can look forward to a bright future, local and national government must be united in their determination to get the best.

Close to the brink

Councils' ability to support older and disabled people is "veering steadily towards the impossible", the LGA has warned in its latest report on adult social care

Local government will be desperately hoping the Autumn Budget, on 22 November, delivers short and long-term support for one of our most vital public services: adult social care.

There is some cause for cautious optimism, according to the LGA's 'State of the nation' report on adult social care, launched in October at the national children and adult services conference in Bournemouth.

For example, the Chancellor's Spring Budget delivered an additional £2 billion for adult social care over the period 2017/18 to 2019/20. And, as the experience of the 2017 General Election demonstrated, recognition of the need to secure the immediate and future stability of the service is growing all the time, not least among national politicians.

Experience over a longer time period inevitably tempers that optimism, and inertia remains the characteristic we typically associate with the prospects for future funding and reform of adult social care.

It's not for want of trying. Over the last 20 years, governments of all colours, along with several notable independent commissions and reviews, have attempted to plot a path for securing the sustainability of adult social care – to no avail.

The LGA's report asserts this simply cannot continue. Adult social care is recognised – nearly universally so – as being in crisis right now, with the future outlook no brighter. Funding pressures are mounting, with very real consequences for the entire system, and particularly the very people the service is there to support.

Part of the policy response to the

challenges facing social care continues to be closer working with our partners in the NHS. Over the last year, that relationship has undoubtedly become strained as the ambition for integration has struggled to be enough of a driving force to overcome the barriers associated with the reality of health and care pressures on the ground and the national response to them.

Delayed transfers of care (DTOC) have become a dominant preoccupation, but the focus on councils' role in reducing them has not been balanced. For example, councils are responsible for 50 per cent of the target reduction despite only being directly

"The focus on councils' role in reducing delayed transfers of care has not been balanced"

responsible for 37 per cent of delayed transfers of care; delays attributable to the NHS stand at 56 per cent. Our report therefore also explores what is really happening on the DTOC agenda.

Councils have a proud record of getting on with the job of delivering for their local residents, and doing so in partnership, even in the most testing of circumstances. It is no exaggeration to say that the circumstances are now veering steadily towards the impossible. For adult social care to thrive, we need government to act both for the here and now, and for the longer-term, so that high-quality, person-centred and safe care can be secured for all those who need it.



'Adult social care funding: state of the nation 2017' is available to download free at www.local.gov.uk/publications



Inspecting children's services

The new Ofsted inspections of children's services will focus more on the results of frontline staff's work with children and young people, and less on policies and procedures



Cllr Mark Sutton (Con) is Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire County Council is one of the first local authorities in England to have its children's services assessed by Ofsted under its new pilot inspection framework, which will replace the current Single Inspection Framework from January 2018.

What could be disconcerting, perhaps, for a politician in the new assessment framework, is that Ofsted inspectors spent very little time with senior managers or councillors during their time in Staffordshire. The focus was on assessing the result of work with the children and young people.

They're not looking to see if management can demonstrate policies exist and tick a box, but whether there is evidence on the frontline of these policies having the intended effect.

For example, inspectors noted that 'missing' procedures were being implemented strongly by frontline staff and then traced up the management and delivery process to see how they'd been introduced.

Consequently, there's far less contact at a senior level with fewer opportunities for management to put forward the corporate approach. Instead, it's the actions of frontline staff and the results of their work – work that, in our case, arises from years of investment – that speak for the service.

Under this pilot of the new Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services framework, we were judged to be consistently delivering good services. To be doing so in such a crucial area – one where we really make a difference to people's lives – is very pleasing, especially since the roots of our current strength lie in disappointment at the beginning of the decade.

In 2011, we were surprised to be issued with a 'performing poorly' notice, because

“It's the actions of frontline staff and the results of their work – work that, in our case, arises from years of investment – that speak for the service”

of delays in alerting our First Response Team to concerns and the time it took to act upon those warnings.

We'd already decided to institute fundamental change, moving to a patch-based review of need with targeted early intervention, with the emphasis on giving the 'right help at the right time in the right way'.

After the 2011 judgement, there was concern that the planned structural change might hinder implementation of improvements required by Ofsted. Politically,

though, we were clear: we had to protect and help the most vulnerable in our society and improve their future prospects, so we made a clear commitment of time and resources to make this transition work.

We created a Children's Improvement Board (CIB), chaired initially by the leader of the authority, and attended by other cabinet members, the director of children's services and head of Families First, our service which brings together the full range of county council professionals working with children, young people or their families.

The CIB was conceived to offer clear leadership for the implementation of the changes required by Ofsted, but grew into a more rounded oversight panel. It has since become an integral part of the governance model and its terms of reference extend across the whole children's arena.

As a more joined-up approach evolved, additional, targeted investment was made to increase capacity and support staff, by improving training and managing workload.

We believe passionately that a stable, trained workforce not only builds better relationships with those who need help, but allows senior managers to develop the culture more effectively throughout the organisation where everyone knows what is expected of them.

That continued political commitment throughout the decade means the turnover rate for Families First social workers has remained steady at 3.8 per cent, while use of agency workers lies between 6 and 7 per cent.

#OurDay is coming

The LGA wants to hear from residents about the local public services that matter to them for our annual tweetathon

OurDay is the LGA's 24-hour, live tweetathon that gives everyone who works or volunteers in local public services the chance to showcase how they improve the quality of life of residents every day.

Last year, hundreds of councils took part, with #OurDay trending nationally on Twitter and reaching more than 20 million people.

We want to make this year's event – on Tuesday 21 November – the biggest-ever celebration of the people who keep our communities running, including councillors and nearly one million council staff.

We particularly want to get residents more involved – something you, as councillors, and local community leaders, can help us with.

The aim is to find out what residents around the country love the most about your local area and their council, and find special stories and examples of when council officers have gone the extra mile to help them.

So, if you are talking to residents via social media and email, please point them to our short questionnaire, at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ourday17

We are also encouraging residents to say thank you to the local government employees and elected



members who work hard, day in, day out, to make their area that little bit better. They can do this by signing up to and sharing our resident thunderclap – a campaign tool allowing lots of people to sign up to send an automated scheduled tweet or Facebook status at the same time for maximum impact – at www.thunderclap.it/projects/62518-ourday-thank-you

There are lots of other ways you and your council can help us all celebrate the work of local government and other local public services. For example:

Make some noise

Add your voice to #OurDay with a click by signing up to our thunderclap. You can sign up in seconds at www.thunderclap.it/projects/62519-ourday-2017

Spread the word

Tell other people about #OurDay. Share the thunderclap link in a post on Facebook or Twitter, in an email or in your email signature. You can download a branded e-signature for your emails, and much more, from our toolkit, available at www.local.gov.uk/our-day

Take part on the big day

Tell the world what you and your council are up to from 00.01 on Tuesday 21 November by using the hashtag #OurDay. Our how-to guide has lots of tips and advice

on how to get your messages out there, and we have packed a toolkit with resources to save you time, from press releases to template posters and photo boards.

Cllr Paul Bettison OBE, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: "#OurDay is a chance to reflect on 24 hours in the life of councils.

"It is a great way to show our residents what council officers are doing every day to improve the quality of life of our residents. We're excited that some of the stories behind the huge variety of vital services that councils provide every day across the country will be heard.

"#OurDay is a nationwide event for all councils, councillors and staff to get involved in, to highlight the amazing work that is going on in their communities.

"Councils are the most efficient, open and transparent part of the public sector and we're looking forward to being part of the #OurDay conversation and to hear from councillors, officers and residents on Facebook, Twitter and social media."

i For more information about #OurDay 2017, please visit www.local.gov.uk/our-day and keep up to date on Twitter by following @LGACOMMS

Safeguarding consumers



Cllr Simon Blackburn is Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Council trading standards services are at the forefront of protecting residents and businesses from scams and rogue traders

Trading standards is a service that punches well above its weight in terms of impact.

The work of council trading standards officers improves outcomes for communities, safeguards consumers and protects legitimate businesses from illegal traders.

Their work includes: tackling counterfeit tobacco and alcohol; stopping rogue traders from selling dangerous products and counterfeit goods; investigating and raising awareness of scams; taking action on underage sales of harmful products, such as knives and cigarettes; checking for misleading or incorrect labelling,

particularly on food; protecting food standards and animal health; advising consumers and businesses about the law; and, not least, prosecuting offenders and supporting victims.

Fraud is now the most common type of crime, accounting for 3.6 million offences in England and Wales last year, and costing UK citizens £10 billion a year.

More than two frauds, or scams and attempted scams, are being reported to some councils every day. This could be the tip of the iceberg, however, as only 5 per cent of scams are reported, often because of embarrassment or people simply being unaware that they have been deceived.

New and convincing scams are emerging all the time, with internet fraud, or e-crime – such as fake or copycat websites – now having a significant role in trading standards' work.

More than 600,000 people in the UK are known to be on 'suckers' lists' – their details are bought and sold by criminals who target them, knowing they have previously responded to a scam of some kind. Victims whose details appear on such lists can receive up to 70 scam letters a day, typically promoting fake prize draws and bogus investment schemes. Unsurprisingly, elderly and vulnerable victims are prime targets. The average loss suffered by a mass-marketing fraud victim, aged between 75 and 79, is £4,500. In extreme cases, victims have lost their homes and life savings.

Scams knock people's confidence and trust in others, with the health of elderly victims being more prone to suffer. Older people defrauded in their homes are two-and-a-half times more likely to enter

i The Chartered Trading Standards Institute has made a video for councillors on the impact of trading standards, see www.tradingstandards.uk/news-policy/news-room/2017/the-impact-of-trading-standards. The National Scams Team, supported by ADASS and the LGA, has written guidance for councils on financial abuse and scams, see www.adass.org.uk/top-tips-financial-abuse-and-scams

Blackpool Council

A customer tip-off led Blackpool Council to one of the biggest trading standards cases in the UK. After a member of the public called to report he had bought a suspected fake Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle toy from a local store, trading standards officers travelled across the country to recover and seize any other toys being supplied by the company concerned.

They seized 270,000 character toys – including fake Turtle and Spiderman figures (pictured) – worth more than £1.5 million. The company's director and his business were prosecuted and found guilty of 34 counts of breaching the Trade Marks Act 1994. The director received a two-year suspended jail sentence and was disqualified as a company director for four years.





“Older people defrauded in their homes are two-and-a-half times more likely to enter residential care within two years, leading to extra health and social care costs”

residential care within two years, compared with older people who are not victims of fraud. This leads to extra health and social care costs, which could be avoided.

Local authorities are helping victims of scams get their money back from fraudsters through proceeds of crime hearings. They are also promoting devices that block unwanted phone calls, and setting up ‘No cold calling zones’ to deter rogue doorstep traders. Local trading standards teams are working jointly with National Trading Standards to secure successful prosecutions against the perpetrators.

Investigating fraud and scams cases can be time-consuming. With the number of trading standards officers having more than halved since 2009, and a 46 per cent budget cut in the service since 2011, trading standards is under significant pressure in

maintaining its vital but varied role protecting local residents.

To address the challenges facing trading standards, some councils have developed shared services. For example, Devon and Somerset County Councils have combined trading standards services and made efficiency savings of more than £1 million. More clarity from government on priority policy areas – including publication of the long-awaited 2015 review into trading standards – would also help tackle these issues.

Trading standards plays an essential role in supporting our local communities. However, there needs to be greater understanding of the full impact of its work to protect consumers and businesses if it is to continue to do so in a world where supply chains, food supplies and scams are increasingly hi-tech and complex.

West Sussex County Council

One phone call to West Sussex’s trading standards about an overheating charger led to the recovery of £1.3 million of fake Apple chargers, batteries, cables, headphones and adapters (pictured) from a London warehouse. Products were instantly recognised as fakes because many had the same serial numbers – a tell-tale sign, as all official Apple products carry unique serial numbers to identify them.



Nottinghamshire County Council/National Trading Standards

The largest-ever criminal investigation led by the National Trading Standards Regional Investigations Team (East Midlands), which is hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council, secured compensation for 45 victims of a multi million pound fraud case involving the mis-selling of advertising space to businesses across the UK and Europe.

Nine directors of the company responsible were ordered to pay more than £163,000 in compensation to their victims – some of whom lost their homes and businesses. Several directors of the company received jail sentences, ranging from 16 months to six years.

Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council’s trading standards service has seized more than 180,000 illegal cigarettes and 50 kilograms of hand-rolling tobacco since launching a campaign urging people to report counterfeit tobacco sales. Several offending traders have been successfully prosecuted for their crimes and had their premises licences revoked.

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Trading standards officers seized nearly 300 fidget spinners from shops and stalls in Bath after finding they had small parts that could easily pop out, causing a choking hazard to young children. Some featured a blade with sharp pointed edges and others had LED lights containing lithium-ion batteries that, if ingested, could cause internal bleeding. Trading standards officers worked with the fidget spinner sellers to trace the supply chain and identify the importers.



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interview

Fiscal freedom fighter

Treasury rules preventing councils from borrowing to build more homes are “insane”, says **Sir Vince Cable MP**, Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Cash-strapped councils are unlikely to get a good deal from the Chancellor when he delivers his Autumn Budget on 22 November, predicts Liberal Democrat Leader Vince Cable MP.

Speaking to **first** after his party's annual conference in Bournemouth and ahead of the Budget, he says he doesn't expect to see radical changes.

"Philip Hammond is very much in the George Osborne mould, and is not particularly well disposed towards public spending in general and local authorities in particular. I would be surprised, and pleasantly surprised, if there were significant easing," he says.

"You do need to have responsible financing. There isn't a magic money tree, whatever the Labour party claims, and you do need to have some discipline over spending. Nonetheless, under present circumstances, there does need to be some easing; it is too tight, damage is being done."

Alongside children's services, the biggest funding headache for councils is adult social care – where the LGA has reiterated its call for an immediate cash injection of £1.3 billion just to prop up the current care system in its Budget submission (see p10).

Dr Cable says the lack of progress on finding a long-term solution to the financial crisis in health and care is "infuriating", given "efforts over many years to resolve this problem on a cross-party basis". The Lib Dems' policy of an extra 1p on income tax to ease the health and care sector's finances "wouldn't resolve the problem, but would help it", he says.

"At the moment, we are trapped in a vicious circle where, because local authorities cannot fund social care, people are backed up in hospital, and you have bed blocking problems with very elderly people. This, in turn, makes hospitals difficult to operate. We just need to unblock that very difficult situation.

"Health and social care do need to be seen, financially, as a whole and there are some experiments around the country where that increasingly is happening. I was told that Dudley in the West Midlands is a good model and that it is being tried in Manchester, and that's the way we've got to go."

He talks of a ringfenced budget for health and social care that reflects the state of the economy and demand for services in a way that's reliable, "so that the NHS and councils are not living hand to mouth".

The former Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills is also frustrated by how the Treasury treats capital and current spending as if they are the same – with harmful consequences for public investment,

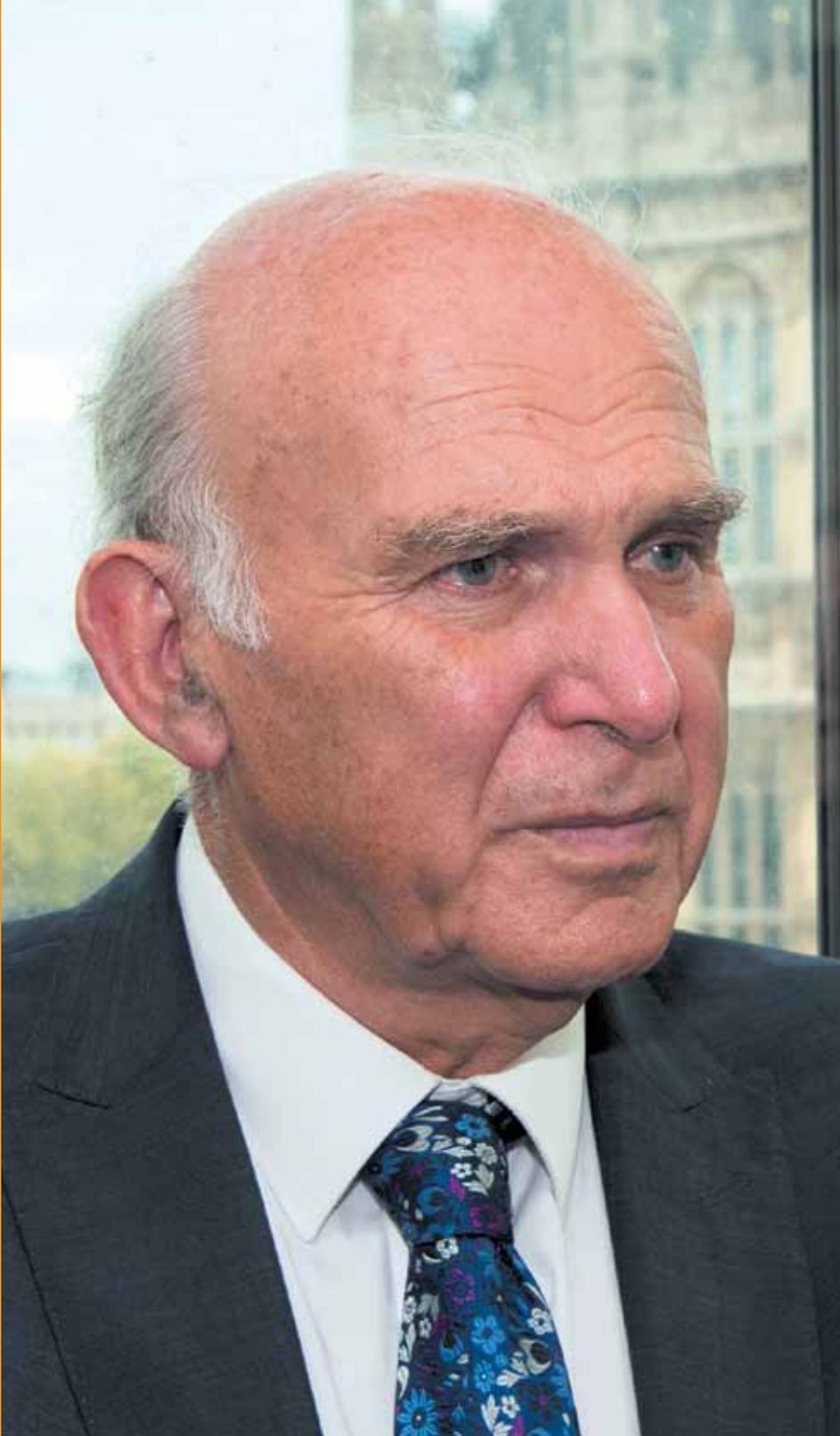
including in housing. He would like to see caps on council borrowing removed for building new homes – something the LGA has long called for, and has pressed for again in its Budget submission (see p10).

"Local authorities could do an awful lot if they had greater freedom to borrow to invest," Dr Cable says.

"My understanding is that councils are allowed to [borrow from] the Public Works Loan Board to do commercial development, including commercial development in other parts of the country, when they are not allowed to build houses. >

"Local authorities could do an awful lot if they had greater freedom to borrow to invest"





“It’s very difficult for councils to make a difference if they are massively constrained in their funding capabilities”

> “This is absolutely insane and the worst kind of Treasury nonsense.”

He is in favour of building more homes not just to help tackle the housing crisis, but also as a way of addressing widening and intergenerational inequalities in the UK.

“The main issue that affects wealth inequality – not so much income inequality – is housing,” says Dr Cable.

“Unless we get that right, with a big increase in housing supply – both private and social, and mixed and shared ownership – wealth inequality is going to widen, for the very simple reason that large numbers of younger people simply cannot get onto the ladder of owner-occupation and the implied distribution of wealth that goes with it.”

The lack of funding and fiscal freedoms for local government is also constraining what the new combined authorities and devolution can achieve, he believes.

“It’s very difficult for councils to make a difference if they are massively constrained in their funding capabilities. I think there has been good work done to develop combined authorities with real decision-making powers – Manchester pioneered it but Birmingham has gone a long way – and I very much welcome that.

“But without revenue, and without greater borrowing powers, their scope for doing a great deal locally is seriously inhibited.”

Devolution, says Dr Cable, has been limited, “grudging”, with “little fiscal autonomy for local authorities”.

He is in favour of councils having greater freedom to set their own tax rates, including council tax, but wants a fairer council tax system, with more bands to capture the “inflation of value” at the top end of the housing market. He also wants to see greater localisation of business rates – although he has concerns about the latter form of taxation.

“One has to be careful with business rates. It’s a problematic tax in itself because it’s a tax on business improvement; it’s got perverse incentives because large numbers of new internet companies don’t pay it because they have electrons rather than buildings. And there are lots of genuine issues with traders in city town centres,” Dr Cable says.

“The principle of greater devolution must be right providing you have some kind of compensation mechanism, otherwise the City of London gets vast amounts of revenue and, if you are Sunderland or Hull, you get very little.”

Dr Cable also wants to see the strategic role of local authorities strengthened in respect of school improvement and planning places. “We’re already seeing the nonsense that erupts when you have free

schools and academies extracted from any form of local authority planning – getting schools built in the wrong place without any evaluation of the wider picture. It's very damaging," he says.

"I know my borough [Richmond] is perhaps exceptional, because it's a high income area, but the local education authority was a very good, creative, supportive influence. There is a massive frustration among parents and schools that matters have been taken out of their hands locally. I want to see the balance of power shifted back to local authorities."

At the party's annual conference in September, the LGA's Liberal Democrat group was successful in amending a motion on Brexit, to include the LGA's call for local government to have the same advisory role in policy and law-making that it currently has in the EU via the Committee of the Regions (see **first** 616, p30).

The party remains committed to a referendum on any deal to leave the EU, and Dr Cable warns that Brexit is

"sucking the energy out of government".

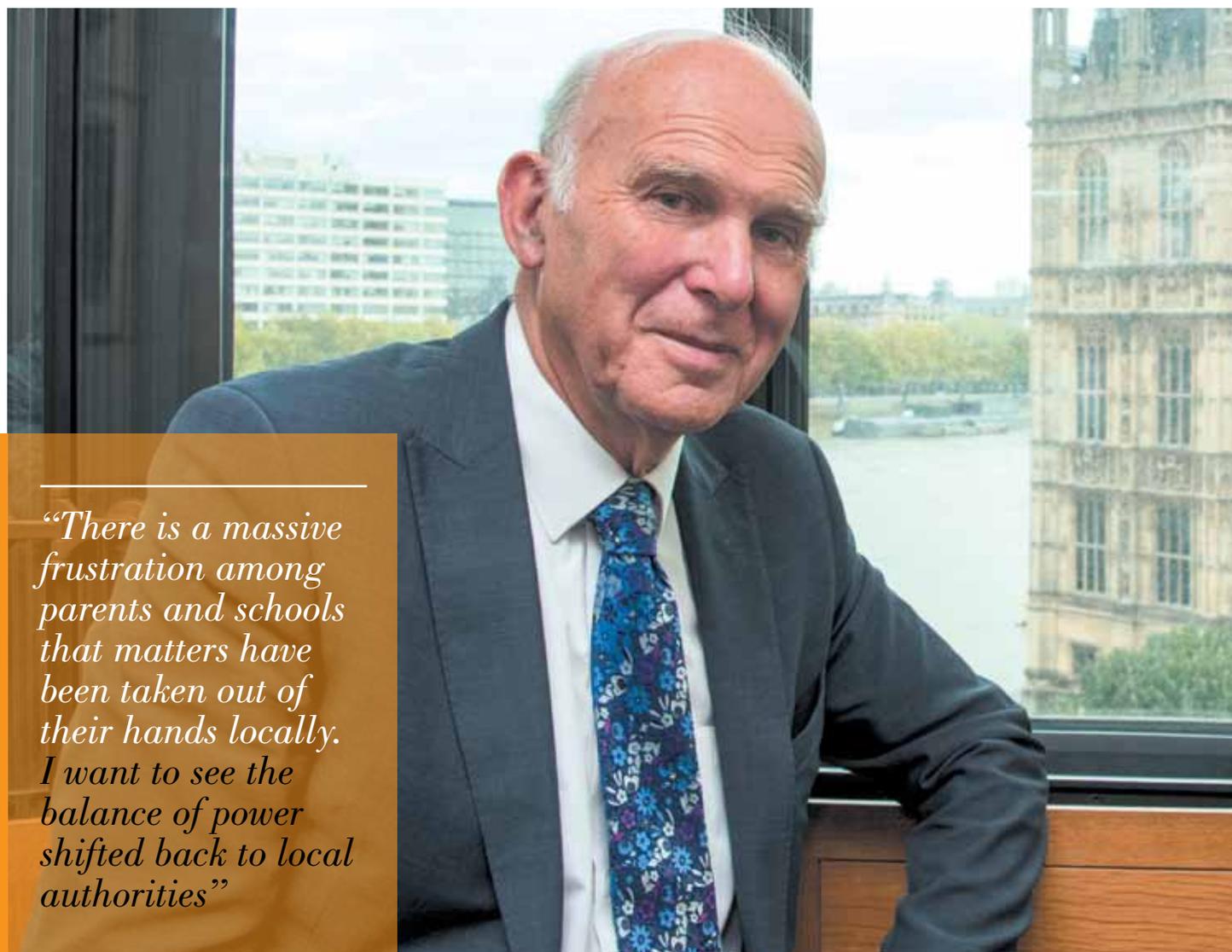
"Big things that should be happening aren't happening, whether it's around the industrial strategy, the NHS, or creative things with devolution."

He says he is keen to capture the council perspective, with the help of "some of the big beasts in local government in our party", such as Lord Shipley, the former Leader of Newcastle City Council, and Baron Storey, the former Liverpool City Council Leader, who were recently appointed Lib Dem Housing Spokesperson and Young People spokesperson respectively.

The Liberal Democrats were doing well in local by-elections up until this year's General Election, and Dr Cable is optimistic about the party's prospects in next May's local elections.

"My party has a lot of potential, not least because politics has become very polarised between extremes," he says.

"I'm not, at this stage, saying we're going to win this, or give numbers of seats, but I think we are in a good position to do well – and better than this year."



"There is a massive frustration among parents and schools that matters have been taken out of their hands locally. I want to see the balance of power shifted back to local authorities"

National Lead Peer – one post

£300 a day – number of days by agreement on appointment

Two year appointment

The Liberal Democrat Group at the Local Government Association (LGA) is looking to recruit a new National Peer to lead its improvement work from a political perspective, working closely with the group office, the leadership of Liberal Democrat Group, and overseeing the Liberal Democrat Group's improvement support and mentoring offer to its council groups and councillors.

Candidates for National Peer must be available for interview on both the 4 and 5 December 2017 in London.

Regional Peer – one or two posts

£300 a day – 30 to 60 days a year to be agreed on appointment

Two year appointment

The Liberal Democrat Group is looking to recruit up to two regional peers who will support the National Peer in the LGA Liberal Democrat Group's improvement work across the country. Candidates for the regional roles must be available for interview on the 5 December in London.

The deadline for applications is 5.00pm on the 10 November 2017.

Candidates are positively encouraged to discuss their interest in any of these roles and for more information about the time commitment and expectations, with **Councillor Howard Sykes MBE**, Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group.

Email: howard.sykes@local.gov.uk to book a chat well before the 10 November deadline.

Find out more www.local.gov.uk/lga-libdem-group/about-us/group/Lib-Dem-Groups-Peer-posts

Know your patch

Have you ever wondered what proportion of your residents are employed or how many local schoolchildren are obese? How does that compare to other places?



LG Inform gives you and your council easy access to up-to-date published data about your local area and the performance of your council and fire and rescue service.

Whether you're interested in scrutiny, a particular service area, or simply need an overview, it can help you review and compare performance with other authorities and assess whether your council is meeting your residents' needs.

► To view LG Inform and register visit: www.lginform.local.gov.uk

comment

Boundary reviews and councillor numbers



Professor Colin Mellors is Chair of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Given their other responsibilities, councillors might not spend much time thinking about the number of elected members their council needs or whether current democratic arrangements are best suited to modern circumstances.

As a regulator – and, increasingly, a facilitator – the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is committed to helping authorities navigate their futures. Independent of Whitehall, the commission occupies a unique place in English local government. Typically each year, commissioners visit around 30 councils across every region of England. Reviews are most commonly triggered by population changes but, increasingly, councils are asking the commission to look at their electoral arrangements. Most of these approaches are because they want us to examine the number of councillors elected to their authority.

The review process begins by inviting the council, and especially elected members, to think about the governance, scrutiny and representational arrangements that will help them achieve their vision for the future. It is a chance to think from first principles and to be innovative. This is where the commission's reviews are encouraging a broader debate about modern local governance.

Unlike Scotland and Wales, there is no national framework for councillor numbers and we look to be persuaded by local evidence. We have no view about whether there should be more or fewer elected members.

There are, however, trends that reflect authorities' own views. While about half of our reviews see little or no change in the number of councillors, over the past five years reviews have led to average reductions of 8 per cent. Where the review has been requested, the reduction has usually been much larger, sometimes more than 30 per cent.

Several factors underpin these changes. Often, councillors are taking fewer, but more strategic, decisions. The structure of almost every service has changed since the last England-wide review nearly 20 years ago. While interest in councillor numbers might have been stimulated by recent financial

“Councillors have never been more accessible to residents”

circumstances, the resultant changes have been much more influenced by the needs of new governance structures, fresh approaches to scrutiny, the impact of technology and the enhanced partnership working that now characterises local governance.

We have also observed changes in the ways that elected members work with communities. Online and self-service channels have revolutionised councillor casework. At the same time, councillors have never been more accessible to residents. While the role of a councillor has changed, people's sense of place remains strong, which means that ward boundaries and names really do matter to local people.

We ask councils to balance all these factors when putting forward their proposals so it is encouraging that, in most cases, the commission has endorsed the council's own submission to us about the number of councillors required.

Although our primary role is to create warding patterns that are fair, reflect community identity, and make sense, we want to work in a way that is helpful to local authorities and assist them in pursuing their own ambitions. We also hope our reviews are seen as transparent, as well as independent.

There is every reason to expect that recent trends will continue. Indeed, proposals for mergers and the broader devolution agenda may well see the pace of change accelerate. The commission is keen to play its part in helping new authorities build electoral arrangements that are fit for purpose, durable and reflect councillors' aspirations for their area.



You can find out more about the work of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England at www.lgbce.org.uk

Working towards a fair housing market

“Councils are a key part of the solution to these housing challenges”



Cllr David Simmonds CBE
is Leader of the LGA's
Conservative Group

It was great to meet so many friends and colleagues at the Conservative Party conference in Manchester in October.

Our LGA fringe meeting involved a stimulating discussion on how we can bridge the skills gap, with excellent contributions from both the panel and the audience.

Following this, I hosted our drinks reception, which was addressed by Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, and Sajid Javid MP, Communities and Local Government Secretary.

Sajid took the opportunity to thank Conservative councillors for their hard work on behalf of their communities, while also noting the excellent results that we had achieved at the local and mayoral elections in May.

Inevitably, there was much discussion at the conference about why we did not secure the result we had hoped for at the General Election in June.

Unsurprisingly, housing was identified as a key issue and both Sajid and the Prime Minister used their speeches to emphasise that the Government is clearly aware of the challenges.

Key announcements included an additional £2 billion for the affordable housing programme to encourage the building of new council homes and, in relation to the private rented sector, confirmation of changes to incentivise secure tenancies, tackle rogue landlords and invest in new homes for 'affordable rent'.

The Government also announced last week

that there will be social rent increases based on the consumer price index (CPI) plus 1 per cent from 2020 for five years, following four years of rent reductions. The LGA has estimated this will be equivalent to an extra £1.3 billion by 2024/25.

I strongly welcome these announcements and the wider recognition that action is required to fix the problems that are being experienced across the housing market.

Along with colleagues from across the political spectrum here at the LGA, I believe that councils are a key part of the solution to these challenges and that it is crucial the sector works in close partnership with the Government to ensure we achieve a fair housing market.

chairman's comment

Children and adult services



Lord Porter
is Chairman of the LGA

The current furore around delays in getting mostly older patients out of hospital and back home, with appropriate care arrangements in place, would suggest that this is one of the most important things councils do.

It's not. Preventing our older friends and relatives going into hospital in the first place is the most important thing we do.

Keeping people safe and healthy in their own homes for as long as possible is the best way to reduce the pressures on the NHS.

As we all know, the adult social care services that help do that are

themselves under immense financial pressure, with rising demand from an ageing population and declining council budgets.

Despite the extra £2 billion for adult social care in the Spring Budget and the introduction of the adult social care council tax precept – both welcome steps in the right direction – the LGA calculates these services will be short of £1 billion by 2019/20.

Things are no better in children's services. Record numbers of children are now in care, with 75 per cent of councils overspending on their children's services budgets by more than £1 million pounds each in 2015/16.

The Early Intervention Grant – which helps fund work aimed at preventing children and families falling into crisis – has been cut by almost £500 million since 2013, and

is projected to drop by a further £183 million by 2020.

Our Autumn Budget submission anticipates a £2 billion funding gap by 2019/20 for children's services (see p10). In response, we have launched our Bright Futures campaign calling for proper funding of the services that change children's lives (see p12).

The more money we invest in prevention now, the less money we waste in the future. Let's hope the Chancellor's Autumn Budget on 22 November will recognise this and take a coherent approach to improving the funding situation for these two vital services – and the vulnerable local residents who depend on them.

“The more money we invest in prevention now, the less money we waste in the future”



Cllr Nick Forbes is Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

Free up councils to tackle housing crisis

*“Local government wants to build **one million new homes by 2020**”*

The growing housing crisis is a reminder that cuts have consequences.

In 2010, the Coalition slashed government funding for affordable homes by 60 per cent – and seven years on, we have just built the fewest affordable homes in 24 years.

While the extra £2 billion that the Prime Minister coughed up for affordable housing is welcome, it is simply not good enough. It works out at just 10 council houses per council over the five-year term, amounting to no more than 5,000 homes a year.

Estimates say 250,000 homes per year need to be built just to keep up with current demand. The last time the country built houses on this scale, councils built nearly 40 per cent of them.

Local government wants to build one million new homes by 2020. The Government still has the chance to make this a reality through the Budget, giving us the tools and resources we need.

The Chancellor should lift the housing borrowing cap, re-establish self-financing, and provide a sustainable, long-term financial framework for councils to invest in new homes, of all tenures, through housing revenue accounts.

Labour leaders have written directly to the Prime Minister and called on her to take decisive action, and let us get on with building more and better homes for local people. Instead of standing in our way, the Government needs to let us help solve the housing crisis it has created.



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

More cash needed for social housing

*“We must welcome any investment in housing but **Theresa May’s £2 billion for social housing is unlikely to solve the problem**”*

Saved for the final day of the Conservative party conference, Prime Minister Theresa May’s speech was planned as the crowning glory of the week in Manchester, yet descended into a catastrophic mess, with the stage falling apart, endless coughing fits and a prankster hopping onstage to hand her a P45. I was even a little sympathetic!

Amid the carnage came the housing announcements. On the one hand, we must welcome any investment in housing but, I’m sorry to say, Theresa May’s £2 billion for social housing is unlikely to solve the problem; even Number 10 aides admit this will create just 5,000 extra homes a year. This is nothing but a drop in the ocean compared to what we need.

This is one of many challenges that local government faces. So my asks of the Chancellor and his November Budget are not only to boost the housing market further, but to tackle the massive social care funding abyss that we are staring into, the children’s services funding car crash that is round the corner, and the worrying back-tracking by government on helping councils financially with the after-costs of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

So Mr Hammond – now is the time to listen to local government and not act dumb; we have a record of delivery, so give us the cash and let us get on with it.



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

Conferences showcase inspiring speakers

“We support our councillors wherever they are, and last month it was at our regional and member party conferences”

Ophelia’s hurricane winds and apocalyptic sky seemed to reflect the crisis in government, whereas our group members shine by contrast, as steady, consistent voices working hard for residents, all year round, not just at election time.

The big forthcoming event for all of us is our LGA Independent Group annual conference on 24 November at 18 Smith Square, Westminster. It is always a brilliant event and I hope you can make it (see www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent/events for more information and to book your place).

The LGA’s Independent Group is supporting our councillors wherever they are, and last month, it was at our regional and member party conferences.

Thanks for the warm welcome and invitations to speak. The UKIP leadership contest was settled as Henry Bolton won, after around 35 hustling events. The chairmanship of the UKIP Association of Councillors was contested and won by Cllr Peter Reeve.

I met with Caroline Lucas MP and Jonathan Bartley, joint Leaders of the Green Party, at its conference, as well as Elise Benjamin, Chair of the Green Councillors Association, and Robert Lindsay, the Convener, supported by a good turnout of lively colleagues.

As **first** was going to press, I was looking forward to meeting councillors at Plaid Cymru’s annual conference, and at the Independent Group conference in November.

Conferences are always inspiring with ready good humour and many excellent speakers among our members.



For more information about the LGA’s political groups, see www.local.gov.uk

Parliamentary boundaries made local



Sam Hartley is Secretary to the Boundary Commission for England

The Boundary Commission for England is looking at how best to draw the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies, and needs your help.

Last year, we published our initial proposals for new parliamentary constituencies and asked people to tell us what they thought about our plans – and they really did! Thanks in no small part to local authorities helping us to engage with citizens, we received more than 25,000 public comments on our first set of proposals, with many passionate and well-evidenced representations that have really helped us understand the variety and strength of community feeling around the country.

We have been tasked with reducing the number of constituencies in England, from 533 to 501, and making the number of electors in each constituency more equal. We have consulted the public twice already, and recently published our revised proposals.



These are built heavily on the views of local citizens garnered during the consultations, and after travelling the country and seeing many of the areas of contention on the ground. We have decided to change more than half our initial proposals to reflect local communities better.

For local government, the implications of our recommendations could be considerable. It is inevitable that MPs will find their constituencies covering more local authorities; conversely, many councils will find they are dealing with multiple MPs. So everyone in – and have strong opinions on – our proposals.

We're also asking for help from local councils and councillors to raise the profile of our review. We have published a variety of partner resources that councils can use to help us engage with the public.

Our proposals can be viewed at www.bce2018.org.uk, where you can see what we have changed and compare the proposals with existing constituencies and local government boundaries in your area. The deadline to comment is 11 December.

This is the last chance for people to have their say and it's important that as many as possible have the opportunity to contribute to this fundamental democratic exercise.

“We have received many passionate and well-evidenced representations that have really helped us understand the variety and strength of community feeling around the country”

Turning the finances around



Cllr John Townend (UKIP) is Cabinet Member for Finance and Estates at Thanet District Council

In May 2015, Thanet saw a new political administration. It was, and remains – just – the only UKIP council in the country.

Past mistakes, and a little bad luck, had left the council's finances in a parlous state.

It had received a qualified 'value for money' audit opinion of its 2014 accounts and a critical peer review report from the LGA, and had a revolving door of professional staff. On our arrival, we were confronted with a collection of financial nasties from the Section 151 officer.

Dealing with this meant drawing £10 million from reserves, leaving general fund reserves at just £6 million a year later. This level has broadly been maintained – a heroic feat in itself.

Fast forward two years, and we have stayed within budget, had clean external audits in both years, a positive follow-up peer review and saved £2 million a year on a net revenue expenditure of £17 million. The council even voted unanimously in favour of the 2017/18 budget – the first time in living memory. So, how have we come this far?

First, let me say, we aren't out of the woods. Apart from the pressures and uncertainties of local government finance, we have a low level of reserves that inhibits our ability to take risks, even if the rewards are attractive enough for a wealthier authority to go ahead. Nonetheless, progress has been made.

Cabinet has worked effectively with the corporate management team; there have

been disagreements and tensions, but always respect. We have tried to be transparent – sharing financial data with opposition groups – even though this gives them information to use against us! On balance, we feel that sharing the pain aids understanding about our limited options.

Our staff are endlessly patient and knowledgeable. They instill confidence in us as a cabinet, and have clearly improved financial management massively. Much of the credit goes to our chief executive in creating and leading a stable management team.

In fact, thinking about all the changes we have made over the two years, most have been small improvements on a pathway of good business practice – which, collectively, make a big difference.

“We have a low level of reserves that inhibits our ability to take risks”

Councils bearing heaviest burden of austerity in Wales



Cllr Debbie Wilcox
is Leader of the Welsh LGA

The local government settlement announced by the Welsh Government continues an eight-year run of real term reductions to council funding.

In the context of ongoing and prolonged austerity, councils will view this as a very difficult and challenging settlement for supporting vital services that contribute to the education, health and wellbeing of our communities.

Leaders across Wales have pushed for parity of funding and particularly sought new investment in a range of services, such

“Services are wearing down to the point of collapse and the public are rightly growing frustrated”

as economic development, environmental health and transport, which have been pummelled by cuts.

The headline reduction of 0.5 per cent fails to recognise the full story: with service pressures that amount to £212 million in 2018/19 alone, the sector will have to look for savings of nearly 4.5 per cent of net budgets in the next financial year.

This comes on top of cuts of more than £1 billion that have been made to date and 25,000 job losses across the sector. While the reduction is within the range predicted by the WLGA, local government is still bearing the heaviest burden of austerity.

I have gone on record on a number of occasions to express my frustrations with the UK Government’s austerity agenda; it clearly isn’t working.

The competing demands on the Welsh Government’s own funding presents Mark Drakeford AM, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, with difficult choices, and we recognise his efforts to try to protect local services.

The problem for local government is that we are now in a war of attrition. Services are wearing down to the point of collapse and the public are rightly growing frustrated in terms of paying council tax and yet seeing key community functions cut or closed.



The whole position is unsustainable. Local authorities cannot go on to be expected to make the harshest of cuts while continuing to provide the same breadth and level of service. In short, something has got to give.

i You can view the WLGA’s full response to the Welsh local government funding settlement at www.wlga.wales/local-government-settlement-the-war-of-attrition-continues-says-wlga



Cllr Eddy Humphreys (Con)
is Portfolio Holder for Economy and Jobs at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Town and village centres play an absolutely key role in our communities.

There is little doubt that varied and successful independent retailers are vital in making these centres vibrant and profitable. So how can a council take action to help local independent traders thrive?

I was very interested to learn of a new, innovative scheme called Local Puzzle. It incentivises shoppers to spend more of their budget with the independent sector, at no cost to the businesses themselves.

Not only this, but it also collects valuable data on local economies and spending patterns. Councils and businesses can increase their knowledge of consumers, as well as understand the impact of events on the area – from fetes and carnivals to roadworks and severe weather.

Through use of a mobile phone app,

Supporting local independent traders

shoppers record their purchases and accumulate points for a financial reward, instantly increasing what is spent in the independent sector. Spending can be tracked to each business, providing evidence of increases in trade. Incentives can be used to drive customer spend to a specific business, sector or location. Charities can also benefit from the scheme.

Initial investment comes from the local authority. Ultimately, however, the process is

“Councils and businesses can increase their understanding of consumers”

designed to become self-sustaining – traders are invited to make their own investment once the positive impact on their business is evident.

While this initiative is at an early stage of development, I believe it has the potential to make a real difference to local businesses and economies, revitalising high streets and giving councils much greater insight into customer behaviour. Results so far in pilot areas have shown returns of £10 for every £1 invested; the incentive mechanism alone has led to an additional £2 million of spend.

Here at Reigate & Banstead, we are looking for local authority partners to join us in setting up this support for our areas. If you’d like to know more, please contact Simon Bland, our Economic Prosperity Manager, at simon.bland@reigate-banstead.gov.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

A chance to shine



Cllr Joan Lilly (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Children's Services at Knowsley Council

Over the past year, I've had the pleasure of working with 11 young adults – aged 19 to 25 – with learning disabilities or difficulties, as they took on internships at our council.

The Knowsley Internship Programme, delivered by Knowsley Council in partnership with Knowsley Community College, was launched last September, offering work experience opportunities to young adults for whom finding work may previously have seemed impossible.

We knew they had a valuable contribution to make – they just needed an opportunity to show their potential and shine. That's what they have done, thanks to the enthusiasm of the senior leadership



Kelsey Baker, business support assistant (left), with colleague

teams at the council and college, and the dedication of tutors, mentors and the interns themselves.

Our participants have gained invaluable knowledge, skills and qualifications while working on the job, and can now confidently demonstrate their value to any employer. Importantly, they have been given a sense of belonging, earning a decent wage and being accepted as equals in mainstream society.

One mentor said that his intern looked "two feet taller" having grown in confidence, while parents tell me about the positive impact the programme has had on their entire family, with the interns returning home and talking about their achievements that day.

I'm thrilled to say that most of our first cohort have secured work in a range of roles, including administration, catering and hospitality. We're very proud of them and – better still – they're rightly proud of themselves.

With such promising results, I'm delighted that we've just welcomed another nine young adults, and I'm excited to see what they will go on to achieve.

It's not only the interns who have benefited; council teams joined by interns say it has strengthened team work and there's been a real sense of personal satisfaction in supporting their new colleagues to become valuable and respected members of the team.

For me, the programme has been a fantastic example of what we, as a council, can achieve when we think a little differently. Lives have been changed, and so have minds.

“Our participants can now confidently demonstrate their value to any employer”



Ian Brooke is Chair of the Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association and Head of Community Services at Oxford City Council

My role has changed dramatically since I became Head of Community Services at Oxford City Council in 2008.

Like most senior managers, my remit has become far broader and we are increasingly focusing on how we can use sport to achieve corporate objectives such as reducing health inequalities.

I believe leadership is the most important role for local authorities, and I will be talking about this at the LGA's sport and physical activity conference in December.

In Oxford, we have taken a high-cost leisure service and moved to being a zero-subsidy service. Usage levels have increased by an impressive 53 per cent and far greater outcomes are being achieved. The figures for sport

Local leadership of sport

development are equally positive, with year-on-year increases in regular adult participation reaching 31 per cent in 2016.

We have achieved this through the implementation of an evidence-based Leisure & Wellbeing Strategy. One of the key actions arising from the strategy was investing the money we saved by closing a costly leisure centre that was beyond its economic lifespan into building a high-quality replacement swimming pool adjoining an existing sports centre.

I believe the key ingredients to our successes in Oxford have been playing to our strengths, both in terms of the facilities we have and the things that make Oxford special,

alongside learning from others and taking a real-life leadership role.

Being able to learn from others is one of the benefits of being a member of the Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (cCLOA) – I can usually get some invaluable insights from cCLOA's membership from someone who has already overcome the challenge I am facing.

In Oxford, our next steps are to further our understanding of how all the players who have an interest in getting people active can work better together and continually to improve our partnership working skills, so we can achieve greater and more joined up outcomes for the city's residents.



Ian Brooke is speaking at the LGA's sport and physical activity conference in London on 5 December. Other speakers include Tracey Crouch MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage. To view the full programme of speakers and book your place, please visit www.local.gov.uk/events

councillor

Scrutinising children's mental health services



Cllr Ketan Sheth (Lab) is Chair of Brent Council's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and Lead Governor of Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust

One in four people will experience mental ill health at some point in their lives – so all of us will need support, or know somebody who needs support, from the valuable services that help people to recover and remain resilient.

Mental health has been making headlines and is now a national priority. Earlier this year, the Prime Minister announced plans to transform mental health services, with a particular focus on children and young people. This was followed by a plan to create 21,000 new posts, investing £1.3 billion by 2020.

This brings a welcome focus on how children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing can shape their life chances and outcomes.

Now we must think about how we – as overview and scrutiny committees and elected councillors – understand what is going on behind the headlines and continue to shine the spotlight locally.

Scrutiny work that adds value and makes a positive difference to local residents' lives must take account of a number of important factors. Are elected councillors supported to carry out a meaningful review? Do they understand how to capture the service model? Do they know how to draw

out the challenges to effective delivery of that model? Do they have the tools and information they need to be responsive local decision makers?

In Brent, our Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee recently went behind the headlines to better understand mental health provision for children and young people, and to see how we might add value to the current service model. A Task and Finish Group on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was set up to review this complex area, and its report makes interesting reading.

The task group was put in place to gather evidence – qualitative evidence from face-to-face interviews and research, and quantitative data. This was done alongside

incredibly helpful to have the input and perspectives of young people. We appointed a former member of Brent Youth Parliament – now a student at King's College London – and he brought an excellent viewpoint to the task group's work and deliberations.

Second, it was essential we recognised and embraced the complexity of this area. CAMHS is a challenging subject for overview and scrutiny because it cuts across local government and health responsibilities. While this is excellent news for integrated care, it means we must have the ability to work across a range of people and organisations, recognise that the child or young person – and their family and carers – are a vital part of this system and network of care, and understand their perspective.

“Councillors tend to be far older than the demographic we were seeking to reach, so it was incredibly helpful to have the input and perspectives of young people”

the local NHS, Brent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), local health providers, schools and further education representatives, and community representatives.

I want to highlight two things my committee learned in undertaking this work.

First, the involvement of young people was vital. Let's face it, elected councillors tend to be far older than the demographic we were seeking to reach, so it was

Effective scrutiny can be a powerful vehicle for change if committee members can stand back and really understand what is happening across local government and health services. We try to be constructive and fair in forming our recommendations, especially in areas where we think things could be done differently and outcomes improved.

We have now made our commendations to Brent's cabinet and NHS colleagues, and will monitor progress. In Brent, we will ensure mental health for adults and children and young people remains on the agenda, irrespective of the headlines.



Do you need help with some aspect of your work as a councillor?

Please email karen.thornton@local.gov.uk so we can write about it in **first**

parliament

Party conferences review

With the Autumn Budget set for 22 November, the recent party conferences offered an important platform for the LGA to promote local government policy and funding priorities.

Our chairman, political group leaders and councillors spoke at more than 60 events across the conferences, working with 50 stakeholders, including think tanks, charities and businesses. This helped us ensure the sector's concerns and ideas were heard at these high-profile events.

Through their political networks, our politicians sought to influence their party's policies to secure commitments that will help support local government and our campaigning in the coming parliamentary session.

As well as making the case for local government to be given the powers and funding to bring certainty in an uncertain time, in line with our Budget submission (see p10), our councillors raised the key issues of skills; local government funding and business rates

retention; housing; adult and children's social care; Brexit; and devolution.

The LGA's Liberal Democrat Group secured amendments to a conference motion on Brexit to include our call for local government to have the same formal advisory role on policy and law-making in the UK after we exit the EU as it currently has in the EU, via the Committee of the Regions. In his keynote address, Sir Vince Cable MP, the new Liberal Democrat Leader, reiterated the party's commitment to a 1 per cent increase in income tax to help fund the NHS and social care. He also called for a doubling of annual housing supply, to buy and rent, and declared that the Liberal Democrats are the party of devolution.

At Labour's conference in Brighton, Shadow Communities Secretary Andrew Gwynne MP reiterated Labour's pledge to put council funding on a sustainable footing, and said councils would be £1.5 billion better off under a Labour government.

Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn MP, focused on inequality and living standards in his

speech to delegates. He spoke about the need to upgrade the economy in every region and set out plans for a regional investment bank to support an industrial strategy. He also called for "democracy to break out from Westminster" to communities, with the devolution of powers, and for public services to be made accountable to communities.

In Manchester, Prime Minister Theresa May announced £2 billion for social housing. LGA Chairman Lord Porter said it was good the Government had "accepted our argument that councils must be part of the solution to our chronic housing shortage".

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid also focused on housing, referencing the difficulties young people face getting on the housing ladder and announcing measures for strengthening tenants' rights in his contributions to the conference.

Dr Cable, Mr Corbyn and Mr Javid attended the LGA's local government receptions at their respective party conferences.

The LGA's Independent Group has also been busy across the conferences, with councillors making the case for local government at the UKIP, Green and Plaid Cymru events. The Group will be holding its annual event on 24 November, in London, giving another chance for politicians and stakeholders to discuss the key policy issues facing local government.

MPs have now returned to Westminster and are turning their attention to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill and the announcement of this year's Budget. By taking our campaign priorities to the party conferences, we have helped shape the debate and sought to influence the thinking of MPs, peers and ministers ahead of key national decisions that will affect every local area.

"Our councillors raised the key issues of skills; local government funding and business rates retention; housing; adult and children's social care; Brexit; and devolution"



To find out more about the LGA's parliamentary and lobbying work, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament

elections

Smaller parties squeezed



Professors **Colin Rallings** and **Michael Thrasher** are Associate Members, Nuffield College, Oxford



The more than 30 local by-elections that have taken place during the party conference season offer further evidence of voters coalescing around the established political forces.

Although there were two Independent gains from the Conservatives – in the case of Ashfield, in a contest prompted by the surprise Conservative victory in Mansfield at the 2017 General Election – the overall share of the vote for the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats is up, compared with the previous occasion on which these seats were fought.

“The overall share of the vote for the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats is up”

That said, Labour continues to have most to be pleased about, making two gains from the Conservatives and one from UKIP.

Thetford Priory in Breckland Council and Borehamwood Kenilworth in Hertsmere Borough Council are traditionally marginal wards, with Labour not far behind the winner at the 2015 General Election. The victories now are testament to the growth in the party's electoral strength since then.

As in Thetford, it was again Labour that seemed to benefit most from a slump in UKIP support in the Adur ward of Mash Barn; UKIP

failed even to find a candidate for a seat it won comfortably in 2016.

The parliamentary constituency of which Mash Barn is a part – East Worthing and Shoreham – assumed formal marginal status in June with the Conservative majority over Labour now less than 10 per cent. Together with the rare Labour win in a ward in Worthing itself in August, this result must add fuel to the speculation that the left-leaning demography and politics of Brighton is slowly spreading westward.

Labour did not have it all its own way, however, with two seats lost to the Liberal Democrats. In Oadby and Wigston, the party no longer has representatives on this rare Liberal Democrat-majority council. In Chesterfield – a Lib Dem-held constituency from 2001 to 2010 – Vince Cable's party posted a vote share reminiscent of its heyday.

The Liberal Democrats also consolidated their hold on Three Rivers District Council by gaining a seat from the Conservatives, albeit with a smaller share of the vote than in 2016.

By contrast, the Greens, and especially UKIP, continue to perform poorly. UKIP won 160 seats at the local elections in 2014. It will take a rapid change of fortune under its new party leader if virtually all are not to be lost when those contests are reprised next May.



Only by-election results for seats that changed hands are listed here (see right). **For more information** on these and other recent by-elections, please visit www.local.gov.uk/first

local by-elections

Adur, Mash Barn

LAB GAIN FROM UKIP

10.7% over Con

Turnout 29%

Ashfield, Hucknall North

IND GAIN FROM CON

26.9% over Lab

Turnout 33%

Breckland, Thetford Priory

LAB GAIN FROM CON

28.2% over Con

Turnout 17.4%

Chesterfield, Holmebrook

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB

7.3% over Lab

Turnout 32%

Hertsmere, Borehamwood Kenilworth

LAB GAIN FROM CON

4.1% over Con

Turnout 21.8%

Lancaster, Halton-with-Aughton

LAB GAIN FROM IND

0.2% over Green

Turnout 43%

Oadby and Wigston, Oadby Uplands

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB

4.6% over Lab

Turnout 33%

Three Rivers, Oxhey Hall and Hayling

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

13% over Con

Turnout 30.9%

West Dorset, Lyme Regis & Charmouth

IND GAIN FROM CON

19% over Con

Turnout 28.9%

LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

13-14 March 2018, Hilton Hotel
Newcastle Gateshead

The LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is a key event for senior fire officers and members of fire and rescue authorities. The terrible fire at Grenfell Tower has raised new questions about fire safety and the inspection and enforcement role of fire services. This is against a backdrop of continuing fire reform with implications for collaboration, recruitment, procurement, culture and standards, and the appointment of a new inspectorate.

Join us to discuss these changes, look at good practice and examine how we can develop this further.

To book your place visit: www.local.gov.uk/events



A new vision for youth services conference

6 December 2017, London

Youth services have an important role to play in our communities, supporting young people to achieve their goals and lead fulfilling lives. This conference will consider what the youth services landscape looks like both now and in the future. It will explore how councils and their partners can work together with young people to engage them and provide the best possible services.

Confirmed speakers

Helen Judge, Director General for Performance and Strategy, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Aileen Wilson, Head of Early Help Services, Nottingham City Council

Bethia McNeil, Director, Centre for Youth Impact

Aaron Mansfield, Health and Wellbeing Project Manager, Royal Society for Public Health

To book your place www.local.gov.uk/events

