After yet another year of political uncertainty and continued Brexit stalemate, it is a source of pride to be able to present the LGA Labour Group’s Annual Report, which showcases the brilliant work carried out by Labour Groups across the country, and our work to support them.

Labour in local government continues to offer hope to those that believe Labour can again win elections and use that power to improve lives. All across the country Labour councillors in power and opposition are leading campaigns, changing their communities for the better, and delivering Labour values.

Labour in local government offers a blueprint to our wider movement about how to win power at the national level.

This has been an incredibly busy year, with lots of extra activities and events organised on top of our usual varied programme of events. We designed and delivered the Breaking Point campaign, collated and published the best examples of Labour councils in 100 More Innovations, and carried out Campaign Healthchecks to support Labour Groups ahead of the local elections. We have organised LGA Labour stands and delivered Be A Councillor training at the majority of Labour Regional Conferences, as well as at Annual Conference, Women’s Conference, and other affiliated events. And we’re delighted to have helped set up the first LGBT Labour Cllrs Network in association with LGBT Labour. Our policy work has seen us collate formal responses to Labour Party consultations on youth services, the National Education Service, adult social care, SureStart, and the role of local economic development.

Labour Local Government Conference continues to go from strength to strength, with more councillors attending, more sponsors helping to keep ticket prices down, and more fringe events on offer. This year we had speakers from over fifty different councils including leaders, mayors, backbenchers, and opposition leaders, and with more women speakers for the fourth year running. There was strong representation from the front bench including Jeremy Corbyn, Angela Rayner, John Healey, Dawn Butler, and of course our excellent shadow Communities secretary Andrew Gwynne.

Supporting councillors with training, mentoring, and external reviews of services will always be the bedrock of the work of the LGA Labour Group office, and with the help of our superb ‘peer pool’ of experienced Labour councillors we helped to deliver over 175 peer reviews, mentoring assignments, or training programmes to help Labour councils improve services. Our fantastic Next Generation training course for talented and ambitious councillors was again hugely successful, with four councillors from this year’s cohort now leading councils.

The ‘From Opposition To Power’ residential programme provided intensive support for opposition group leaders and helping prepare them for council leadership, and we also held a number of campaign training events across the UK and an Effective Opposition conference in June. We continue to send our weekly bulletin out to over 7,000 Labour councillors, MPs, and activists, packed with the most recent achievements of Labour councils.

None of this work could have been achieved without the hard work of Martin Angus, Hannah Lazell, and Lewis Addlington-Lee, my talented team in the LGA Labour Group office. Whether supporting our leading councillors on complex policy matters, designing and delivering the Breaking Point campaign, or running the best political leadership training programme in local government they always put in 100% effort, and manage to maintain their sense of humour at the same time. Sadly for us Lewis has moved on to a new job elsewhere in Labour local government, but we are delighted to welcome Martha Lauchlan as his replacement in June.

Only a fool would make any predictions in the current political climate, but with Brexit no closer to being resolved and politics in flux, there is one thing we can be certain of: that the need for Labour councils to keep working hard to deliver quality public services and to support local communities will be greater than ever. We look forward to continuing to support you in your vital work over the next 12 months.
Message from the Leader of the LGA Labour Group

Cllr Nick Forbes (Newcastle upon Tyne)

I am proud to have led Labour in local government during what has been another busy and successful year in which the Labour Group has continued to punch above its weight in promoting and supporting Labour in local government.

Last summer we launched Labour Friends of Local Government to help us engage with Labour MPs, and have run Parliamentary seminars on topics including adult social care, fair funding, and the local elections. Our focus on supporting local campaigning saw us organise a From Opposition To Power weekend, a 100 Days To Go training event ahead of the local elections, and an Effective Opposition conference to support the important work of Labour councillors in opposition. And the LGA Labour Women’s Taskforce has done excellent work in setting out practical steps that can be taken to boost the number of women in leadership positions, and this year produced a Parental Leave policy that has been widely adopted by Labour councils and groups.

In September we launched our ‘Breaking Point’ campaign, giving Labour councillors and Labour Groups the chance to show they are leading the fight against austerity. Labour councillors have organised protests, attended marches, and spoken out against Tory cuts every year since 2010, and this latest campaign produced the biggest ever petition of Labour councillors, which we handed in to Downing Street ahead of the Budget.

A highlight of the year was of course Labour Local Government Conference, held in Coventry in February. Over 400 delegates heard from key speakers including leading councillors, as well as Jeremy Corbyn, and front benchers Angela Rayner, Andrew Gwynne, and Dawn Butler. There were excellent plenaries on the work of the LGA Women’s Taskforce and our Breaking Point campaign, and the main agenda was again complemented with a varied set of breakouts that covered vital issues of policy.

We used the conference to launch our latest publication ‘100 More Innovations’, a compendium of Labour’s recent achievements in local government. The accompanying website www.LGALabourInnovations.com contains even more great examples, and will help to spread good practice throughout the year. Labour councillors and councils are improving people’s lives every day – whether finding radical and innovative ways to deliver services, or in leading the fight against austerity the work we do is municipal socialism in action.

Given the huge issues that Labour in local government is dealing with and the positive work that our Group does to promote best practice and deliver improvement for councils, it was disappointing that we have had to divert valuable time and effort towards defending local government position in our party. I am pleased that some common sense prevailed and that damaging proposals that emerged from the Democracy Review were dropped, but there are still some in our party who seem determined to attack the ability of councillors and councils to get on with their jobs.

Brexit’s domination of politics means that huge issues facing local government continue to be largely ignored, with possibly disastrous consequences. The crisis in adult social care is unresolved. Poverty is becoming entrenched in some communities. Uncertainty persists about how local authorities will receive funding beyond 2020, leaving local authorities with little certainty around how to plan for service delivery after 2020.

The local elections in 2019 were an absolute disaster for the Conservatives, but were again a mixed bag for Labour. Brexit dominated the airwaves, leaving little space for more relevant debates on housing, social care, or council funding. We had a net loss of 80 councillors, but it was great to see Labour gaining majorities in Trafford, Calderdale, High Peak, and Amber Valley, and winning Mayoralties in Mansfield and North of the Tyne. It was of course disappointing to have lost councils including Bolton, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Carlisle. My congratulations go to all those who were elected, and my commiserations to those who stood and lost.

Overall Labour continues to lead around 120 councils in England and Wales – and I am pleased that every Labour council in England and Wales remains in membership of the LGA, helping to ensure that Labour in local government has a strong voice.

Thank you for your support over the previous year – I look forward to working with you all in the year ahead.
Message from the Leader of the Labour Party

Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP

“In the most challenging of circumstances, Labour councils continue to do good things across the country.”

Labour councils are making a difference to people’s lives right across the country. I was a councillor myself and I’m a great believer in local government. Representing your community is a wonderful privilege and great things can be achieved as a Labour councillor.

In February I had the pleasure of addressing the Labour Local Government Conference in Coventry. It is always inspiring to see first-hand the strength of Labour Local Government when it comes together, and to meet so many dedicated and hard working Labour councillors.

As I said in my speech and you know all too well, councils are approaching a decade of austerity driven by a Tory Government in Westminster. Since 2010 councils have lost over half their real terms funding from central Government, while at the same time demand for services is at an all-time high. The Tories claim austerity is over, but we know that simply isn’t true and it’s the areas and people most in need that will lose the most.

The ‘Breaking Point’ campaign led by the LGA Labour Group earlier this year highlighted this crisis engulfing our local authorities. It was the biggest petition of Labour councillors with over 5000 of you signing, delivered to Downing Street and sending a truly united message that Labour councillors are against austerity.

In May we had a tough set of local elections, but I would like to thank all of you who knocked doors, delivered leaflets and took Labour’s message of real change out to the country, helping to get Labour councillors elected. I would also like to pay tribute to those colleagues who were not successful at this election and thank them for their service as Labour councillors. I am always sorry to see colleagues lose their seats and it is a reminder that as a party we need to keep fighting hard every day. Even though this election is over, it is vital we carry on having those essential conversations with people if we are to get a Labour Government.

It is crucial because a Labour Government would end austerity, from the first year boosting council’s budgets and giving communities control over their futures. We’ll stop the cuts to social care, schools, libraries, Sure Start and give councils the means to build the homes people so desperately need.

We know councils will be directly responsible for delivering a significant proportion of our manifesto commitments, which is why it important we give councils and local communities a real say in how money is spent in their area. We will do that by rebuilding local government and setting up a Local Government Commission, made up of council leaders or metro mayors from every region of the country from every local authority type and all major political parties, which will be convened to meet monthly with the secretary of state and inform decision making. It is only right that we involve local people in the decisions that will affect them and a Labour Government is committed to doing so from day one.

In the most challenging of circumstances, Labour councils continue to do good things across the country. Whether it is building council and affordable housing, taking services back in house so they work for local people, starting a local bus company or taking measures to tackle air quality, Labour is innovating and making a difference in local government.

Once again, thank you for all of the work you do as councillors for our Party, making a difference every day to the people you serve. Working together, we will rebuild Britain for the many, not the few.
Last year the LGA Labour Women’s Taskforce was created to address the challenges faced by women in local government, with a particular focus on Labour in local government. The Taskforce is made up of female councillors from all around England and Wales, from Labour Groups in opposition and in power, and the majority of members are BAME.

As a Taskforce, our starting point was our belief that diversity of experience and having different voices in decision-making positions are key to us representing our residents as best as we can and making the best decisions in these tough times. Having listened to women’s experiences of local government, our first priority was to write a model parental leave policy for all councillors. This policy gives certainty to councillors who become parents, making clear the arrangements for leave and the support available to them. We produced two policies – one for Labour Groups and one for full councils. The two policies are similar, but the Labour Group policy makes allowances for campaigning, and the full council policy includes provisions for SRA holders who take parental leave. The policy covers maternity and paternity leave, adoption leave and includes same sex couples. The policy launched at the end of October 2018, and at the time of writing has been passed by 15 full councils and 23 Labour Groups.

Our discussions with councillors throughout the country have also demonstrated the need for more support to councillors who have caring responsibilities. The Taskforce has produced guidance for councils to help them write a carer’s policy that is as inclusive and fair as possible, recognising the barriers faced by councillors with caring responsibilities.

Encouraging more women to stand is a priority area of work for the Taskforce. We know that in 2018 45% of Labour councillors elected were women, and that in 2017 only 33% of councillors across all parties were women. These figures aren’t good enough and change every year depending on election outcomes, but we know from looking around at council meetings that our councils don’t always reflect the communities that we served. Lots of Labour Groups tell us that they want to select more women to be candidates, but they don’t always know the best way to do that. So, we’ve put together a best practice guide sharing examples of where local parties have taken positive action to encourage more women to stand. This has been shared with Group Leaders to be used in upcoming selections. People often talk about the lack of women in leadership in local government, but this needs to start with making sure that more women are councillors in the first place.

Time and time again the toxic culture of politics and the disproportionate effect had on women has been raised in LGA and Labour Party meetings. We want to tackle this and support women in the Labour Party, but we also recognise that this is not something that can be achieved overnight. Changing the culture of politics is wide ranging, including but not limited to, looking at things such as social media conduct, behaviour at meetings, how meetings are run and bias against difference groups of people. We can’t look at these all at once, but over the next year we will be looking at different aspects of political culture and working with other groups within the Labour movement to address this.

The last year has been exciting and productive for us, and I’m looking forward to what the year ahead brings for the Women’s Taskforce and Labour women in local government.
In the summer of 2018, the LGA Labour Group teamed up with LGBT Labour to start working on establishing an LGBT Labour Councillors Network, to support Labour councillors that identify as being in the LGBT community. We began by hosting an informal get-together at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool for LGBT people in local government to discuss what they thought the priorities and purpose of the Network should be. It was agreed that the main two functions of the Network should be to provide support and advice to LGBT councillors and candidates, and to support Labour Groups and Labour run councils in becoming as LGBT inclusive as possible.

Since setting up the Network, we have hosted a number of events and have produced guidance and support for councillors across England and Wales on issues like Relationships Education. At Labour Local Government Conference in February, we hosted a panel discussion exploring ‘30 years on from the introduction of Section 28, how are Labour councils supporting the LGBT community?’ We were delighted to be joined by a majority of women speakers, from across local government and from the shadow frontbench. Thank you to Nia Griffith MP, Cllr Debbie Wilcox, Cllr Sara Rowbotham, Cllr Rishi Madlani and Cllr Anwen Muston for being a part of our launch event.

In May, we ran our first ever Be A Councillor training event, specifically aimed at encouraging more transgender members of the Labour Party to run for council. We are proud that this event was designed and delivered by trans councillors and LGBT Labour’s Trans Officer.

We have been working with a number of national LGBT charities to develop a toolkit on how to advocate for LGBT inclusive Relationships Education, and Relationships and Sex Education. The toolkit will include information on the legal requirements for Relationships Education, the Labour Party position, FAQs, and a model motion to take to your Labour Group. We are looking to release this soon and send it to all Labour councillors.

For more information or to get involved with the LGBT Labour Councillors Network please get in touch with LGBT Labour on lgbtlabouruk@gmail.com.
The past twelve months have been tumultuous for British politics, with much of the discourse dominated by discussions on Brexit. Across the country local government has continued to face challenges, and Labour in local government has continued to be a shining example of what Labour can achieve in power.

After nine years of uncertainty and unfair funding the crisis in local government is now impossible to ignore. Under this Conservatives, local authorities have faced a reduction to core funding of nearly £16 billion since 2010. That means that councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 that the previous Labour Government provided to spend on local services.

Theresa May entered into Downing Street promising to build a country that works for everyone – and then promised to end to austerity – as her time in office comes to an end we are able to reflect on this, and like many areas of her time in office we can find that it was sorely lacking. Instead of the promised end to austerity, in January we saw a Local Government Finance Settlement that once again cut even deeper into council budgets, and confirmed what many of us feared – under this Government, there will never be an end to the pain of austerity. Increase in local government spending power (the Government’s preferred measure), have come from new flexibilities to increase their council tax rates.

The fact is – areas like the one I represent cannot bring in anything like the resources that are needed to meet the growing demand for social care from council tax or see an increase in spending power. This has left areas of the greatest need unable to mitigate for the cuts imposed by this Government, with residents paying more and more in council tax as the services that they rely on are stripped back even further. Research by the LGA has shown that even if all councils used their council tax flexibilities to the maximum allowed, adult social care services would still face a funding gap of £3.6 billion by 2024/25, just to maintain existing standards of care.

The IFS have warned that this is unsustainable, as revenues from council tax and business rates are unlikely to keep pace with rising costs – particularly around social care – and increasing demand for services. The Government’s response to these concerns are to look forward to the spending review, but unless we see a change of direction and a real investment in the sector, many of the local services that people rely on will no longer be there.

The legacy of this Government will not only be its botched Brexit negotiations but the vindictive policies it has taken to our local services, leading to higher crime, more poverty and increased homelessness.

But whilst the Government continues to neglect local services, Labour councillors are stepping up to these challenges and protecting our communities.

Whatever the challenge, however hard the fight, Labour councillors are there on the front line, standing up for our communities – like in Labour-run Leeds, Labour councillors are providing tailored family support that has helped to reduce the number of children taken into care; or in Manchester City Council where they have provided support for care leavers, by making them exempt from paying any council tax until they reach the age of 25. Over 60 Labour councils have introduced similar exemptions for care leavers.

Or in Islington, the Labour council is working to reduce knife crime through its Integrated Gangs Team – which has helped to reduce knife crime among under-25s by 13%, and in Waltham Forest, where councillors have developed a similar programmes to support young people and avoid them turning to a life of crime.

And in fighting austerity – last year, over 5,000 Labour councillors signed the ‘Breaking Point’ campaign petition demanding that the Tory Government immediately reverse the damaging effects of austerity.

Austerity Britain isn’t over – but across the country Labour councillors are showing that it doesn’t have to be this way.

Under the shadow of this Government, Labour councillors are innovating, standing up against austerity, and protecting local services – torch bearers for the new politics that we will see with the next Labour Government.
It’s a year since I was elected as Mayor of the Sheffield City Region, and though I am pleased with the progress we’ve made, there is much still to do.

Working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and our local councils, we have invested £77.2m in our communities. We’ve supported a range of projects, across South Yorkshire that will promote growth, create jobs and support our growing economy.

For the first time in a generation, we have seen a resurgence of advanced manufacturing and engineering. Global brands such as McLaren have established new research and production facilities and are now working with our universities and colleges to provide high-quality jobs and establish new supply chains. But that alone is not enough.

If we are to improve productivity and grow our economy further – whilst ensuring that growth is inclusive – we must better connect our people and places. To do that we must challenge ourselves to change the way we travel.

To meet this challenge I have agreed a transport strategy that complements the wider TfN Strategic Transport Plan; launched a major bus review to improve the service offered to our communities; and have appointed Dame Sarah Storey as my Active Travel Commissioner in order to tackle the problems of air quality and congestion and improve public health. Together these measures will affect real change, not just in the long term, but within the next three years.

However, it isn’t just through direct spending where Mayoralties have huge potential. They also serve as a way of bringing people together to work collaboratively; through the soft power of ‘convening’ mayoralties can demonstrate the value of both cooperation and common endeavour.

Through collective working I am developing important new partnerships to tackle both rough-sleeping, and excess winter deaths and using the same approach to establish a new Music Board to promote South Yorkshire’s unique cultural offer.

Cooperation, representation and a desire to empower all voices within my region are also the reasons that, within my first few months in office, I appointed a trade unionist to the LEP and established a Youth Combined Authority to give young people a real say in the decisions we make. These are initiatives that are not just about the perception of representation but the actual empowerment of those whose voices have, for too long, not been heard.

But whilst I take some pride in what my team has accomplished, the truth is that it has been an incredibly challenging year. The Government has been consumed by Brexit, finding agreement on the future of regional devolution has – at best – been slow, and the funding I have is vastly overshadowed by cuts to local authority budgets. It feels at times as if the best any of us can do is tinker round the edges of a government agenda that is fundamentally flawed.

Most worryingly, as existing funding streams draw to a close, we are yet to learn how the Government intends to replace the half a billion pounds that South Yorkshire has received from Whitehall and the EU over the last five years. This kind of uncertainty is damaging and representative of a centralised, Whitehall-centric, investment approach that is not fit for purpose.

The UK needs to abandon its outdated economic and political model that’s only hope is for wealth to trickle down and prosperity to ripple out. And instead – through empowering local and regional government – put the right people at the heart of decision making; end the status quo with which so many people have become disenfranchised; and let our communities thrive.

That’s the future we all want; so it’s now up to both Westminster and Whitehall to trust us to deliver it.
Most of us will have heard of the apocryphal Chinese curse, “May you live in interesting times”. In 2019, with Brexit still dominating the political agenda, we truly understand the depth of that curse.

We face a summer of wall-to-wall media coverage of the Tory Party leadership contest giving rise to changes to the normal schedule—The Good, The Bad and the Ugly (but with no good); Britain’s Got Talent (but with no talent); The Thick of It (speaks for itself).

What is for certain, while all this plays out, the interests and needs of local government will remain at the bottom of the agenda. The funding reforms, the social care green paper, the pressures on children’s services and housing – all lost in the gurning pantomime of Conservative prime ministerial candidates who have driven the austerity agenda for the past nine years pretending that suddenly they care.

As usual, when the public are frustrated with national politics, it is local councillors who feel the backlash. It gets harder to focus doorstep conversations on local issues. Reporting back to the public on the perverse and damaging decisions made by the ruling administration merely feeds into the public’s anger about politics.

Of course, if there had been a serious commitment from the Conservatives for devolution in England, it would be easier to separate the local from the national and there would be more scope to get the job done properly.

It has long been said that being in opposition is no fun at all, and that is undoubtedly true, even in the best of times. But amid the gloom there is still some light. There are many single issue protest groups that have emerged in recent times. They tend to be not politically aligned, but many of them share Labour’s philosophy: whether they are climate emergency campaigners, save our NHS groups, anti-academy groups, SEND campaigners or anti-fracking groups, to name just a few. Our aim must not only be to campaign with them, but to support them and help them navigate their way into the debate in town and county halls, hopefully building the foundations for a more inclusive, outward-facing relationship between councils and citizens in the future.

Sooner or later, the country will have to move on from Brexit. The only thing that we can predict for sure is that business as usual politics is broken and we should be planning now for the new shape of local democracy to come.

On the morning of Friday 3rd May in the High Peak, we set out to our local elections count, worried and concerned about what the forthcoming results would mean. This was based on the sampling we’d been able to do during the previous night’s verification count, and the results we’d seen from around the country which led a few of us to feel, in Dad’s Army fashion, that ‘we’re doomed.’

However, by the early afternoon, any doubts and fears that we had going into the count were swept aside with a set of results that had seen us gain the five seats needed to take us from opposition to control. We had entered opposition in 2015, following 4 years of minority control, meaning that our efforts to promote and celebrate our successes in minority control were lost by the focus on the general election result.

We were left in despair by the County Council results in May 2017, but were overjoyed when the foundations set in place during that campaign led to a complete turnaround in the 2017 general election making High Peak a Labour gain.

The renewed enthusiasm from that campaign supported by our new MP Ruth George bought a renewed emphasis to local campaigning that led us to a point where we were invited to the LGA Labour’s Opposition to Power course with a prospect of taking control at the next local elections.

That course led by Cllr Tudor Evans, Peter Robbins from the LGA Labour Group Office and David Evans from the Campaign Company, along with colleagues from across the country gave us that essential focus to refine and target our campaign for success. Key amongst those sessions was one from Cllr Stephen Cowan, the Leader of Hammersmith and Fulham, who went through some of their campaign approaches used to take Hammersmith and Fulham from being Cameron’s favourite council to a strong, active, community-focused Labour council.

The most critical aspect of this has been the importance of focusing campaign messages, keeping the mantra of ‘all politics is local’ especially during these last elections when the cloud of Brexit has been an overwhelming issue. There are always ways to improve, and the support of the LGA Labour Group has been instrumental in getting us to where we are with tools like the Labour opposition Facebook group and effective opposition conference, we can all get the ideas, tips and support to make a difference.
The last 12 months have seen austerity continuing and Labour councils bearing the brunt of its impact. It’s also become clear that the Government’s fair funding review is unlikely to provide any respite. Indeed, if the Government succeeds in removing deprivation from parts of the funding formula then for many councils the situation may become even worse.

Against this background and the ongoing uncertainty of Brexit, councils are continuing to change, innovate and rethink their roles. Doing what we always did but in a smaller way is no longer an option.

When austerity came into effect nine years ago, councils took one of three options to try and manage the problem. First, some sought to protect all they had by maximising income, minimising cuts and utilising reserves in the hope that the problem could be outlasted and a change in Government would resolve matters.

The second and most popular strategy was to make those budget savings but to try to ‘carry on as we were’ albeit on a smaller footprint. Again, the hope being one day the budget could be restored and normal service resumed.

The third option adopted by a minimum of authorities was to recognise that the change in fiscal policy was for the long term and that austerity under a Conservative Government would not go away. There is no guarantee that under a Labour Government that local government funding would be restored to 2010 levels, so assuming that “business as usual” would one day return is not necessarily a sustainable long-term strategy.

Slowly over time, as improvement peers, we are seeing councils move from options one and two toward the third as people have realised there is no going back.

Of course, rethinking councils and the role of members has not been and will not be easy. It can create tensions between members and officers. It also requires a local approach.Whilst lessons can be learned from others, councils need to develop local proprietary solutions to sustaining themselves and their communities because the impacts of and solutions to austerity vary and are unique to each location.

As a Labour Group improvement team, we have seen the best in Labour local government in the last year, but also significant challenges where Labour Groups have struggled to accept that things need to change. One thing we must do as Labour councils is be the best we can be to show the country that Labour in power is to be welcomed as we try to build a platform and reputation for an incoming Labour Government. The tools and knowledge at the improvement team’s disposal are extensive and I encourage all of you to utilise them in the journey ahead.

Leadership, be it individual or collective, can be a lonely and difficult place but help is out there and I encourage you to use it.

Peer challenges not only provide a reflection of how councils are combatting austerity in the present but also an insight to the future. Individual mentoring isn’t just for new members. It can provide experienced members the chance to self-reflect and improve further. And team mentoring can bring together the sharing of problems and issues at both officer and member levels.

As we move forward, Labour councils need to continue to show that we deliver the best local government services and solutions. We can only do that by learning from each other. Austerity hasn’t changed our Labour values; rather, it has reinforced them. However, we have to change the way we work to deliver them. Our communities deserve nothing less.
It’s been another eventful year representing local government on Labour’s National Executive Committee.

Local elections
We secured funding and support for local election campaigns, as well as highlighting the important work of Labour-run councils and opposition Labour Groups. Representatives from the Shadow Cabinet, General Secretary’s office, LGA Labour Group, NEC and ALC worked together to plan local election campaigns. Councillors provide essential insight and feedback about election campaigns so our voices need to be heard at the top of the party. Electoral success is built on the hard work of councillors, members, trade unions and MPs working together. Please do share your experience on this year’s local elections and what more you think Labour could be doing in your patch. We will feed this back to the NEC and Shadow Cabinet.

The 2019 local election results push us ever closer to winning back control of the LGA. There is less than 1% between the Tory and Labour groups. If Labour builds on this year’s elections there is every chance we could take back control of the LGA next year.

Winning new Councils
Labour took control of several councils, some in coalition with other parties or independent councillors. Labour councillors will not go into coalition with the Conservatives or far-right councillors. Council coalitions need NEC approval and we have been working with Labour Groups to move from opposition to power. Congratulations to our new administrations, who will put Labour values into practice and deliver for their local communities.

National and European elections
The NEC also continued with preparations for a snap General Election. There was a big push to select candidates in key seats around the UK. It was great to see so many councillors selected to be parliamentary candidates, reflecting the important role we play in our local communities.

The European elections were unexpected and posed a unique set of challenges. We were part of the candidate selection panel, and whilst outstanding candidates were selected, it would be better for members to make these decisions. However, the speed at which these elections were called meant this wasn’t possible. The party must reflect on the disappointing results and the message sent to us by voters in England, Scotland and Wales. We must also reflect on the campaign and what more we could have done as a party to motivate people to support us. Councillors know from bitter experience what happens when you take people for granted.

Increasing Diversity
We are working hard on the NEC to improve diversity of representation in national and local government. This includes getting more women, BAME, LGBT, working class and disabled people to stand for election and take on leadership roles. The Jo Cox Women in Leadership Programme and the Bernie Grant Initiative offer high quality leadership training and it has been great to see so many councillors apply for these programmes. The LGA also has some excellent leadership training that we highly recommend.

Breaking Point Campaign
Councillors across the country supported the Breaking Point campaign to highlight the damage that the reckless Tory cuts have done to local government. Tory cuts mean councils have lost 60p out of every £1 that the last Labour Government was spending on local government in 2010. Northamptonshire has already gone bust and many other councils are struggling. Over 5,000 Labour councillors signed a petition that was delivered to Downing Street by Labour councillors and MPs. It is also important we remember the role the Lib Dems played in delivering devastating cuts in government. We championed this campaign on the NEC, as well as highlighting the importance of supporting Labour councils as budgets are set. The blame for these cuts belongs to the Tories and not hard working Labour councillors.

Parental Leave
We worked with the LGA Labour Women’s Taskforce to draft a model parental leave policy for councils. Thank you and congratulations to the councils and Labour Groups who have passed this or similar policies. Further information is available on the LGA Labour website.

Democracy Review
Last year the NEC decided to defer the local government section of the Democracy Review. We have been attending meetings of a new NEC Local Government Committee to consider how Labour could increase diversity, share best practice and strengthen relationships between Labour Groups and local parties. Thank you to everyone who made submissions to the Democracy Review. We will keep you updated with how this progresses.
Breaking Point campaign

In October 2018, the LGA Labour Group launched our Breaking Point campaign.

Launched ahead of the Autumn Budget, the campaign called on the Government to reverse the planned £1.3 billion of spending cuts, to immediately invest £2 billion into Children’s Services and £2 billion into adult social care to stop these vital services from collapsing, and to pledge to use the Spending Review to restore council funding to 2010 levels over the next four years. Over 5,000 Labour councillors signed our petition that was delivered to 10 Downing Street by a number of Council Leaders and Deputy Leaders alongside Andrew Gwynne MP and other prominent Labour MPs. Labour Groups around the country have passed motions backing the Breaking Point and pledging to continue the campaign against austerity. And Cheshire East Labour Group managed to get their then Tory-run council to pass the Breaking Point motion to commit to the campaign!

Local Government Conference

In February 2019, we held our annual Labour Local Government conference at the Warwick Conference Centre.

The conference, which is jointly run by the LGA Labour Group and the ALC was sold out and was attended by 400 Labour councillors. We were joined by Deputy Leader of the Labour Party Tom Watson MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education Angela Rayner MP and Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities Dawn Butler MP at the dinner on the Friday night. It was a pleasure to welcome back the Leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn MP, as our keynote speaker on the Saturday morning. Once again we had a majority of women speakers as well as our first ever equalities plenary session and LGBT Labour councillors network event. We were pleased to partner once again with our returning commercial partners, as well as welcoming new partners Quattro, Terrence Higgins Trust, and Cancer Research UK. Breakout sessions were held on a diverse range of topics from community organising to housing. We look forward to our conference in 2020, where we will be welcoming even more councillors and national politicians at the East Midlands Conference Centre.

100 More Innovations

Following the success of 100 Innovations of Labour in Power which was published in 2017, at Labour Local Government Conference we launched 100 More Innovations of Labour in Power.

Labour councils are continuing to innovate in the face of austerity, delivering for their communities in new and innovative ways. The publication is a testament to the hard work of Labour councils across the country and shows the difference that Labour in power makes. Innovations ranged from becoming the first public sector body to be granted a water self-supply license (Blackpool), providing specialist LGBT social care (Manchester), tackling the barriers faced by young black men with specialist interventions (Hackney), establishing a city-wide Children’s Charter (Bristol), implementing a sustainable transport strategy (Stevenage) – and much more! Thanks to all those who took the time to send in contributions – we received so many that we set up a website which can be found at www.lgalabourinnovations.com. Please do continue to send through your innovations so we can upload them to the website and continue to showcase your brilliant work.
The last 12 months at the Local Government Association

LGA Labour Leader Cllr Nick Forbes and LGA Chair Lord Porter were presented with a book about the history of Transport House by Labour’s Baroness Prosser.

The Local Government Association is a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure that local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. Over the last 12 months, the LGA has continued to support councils with important policy and support initiatives.

Removing the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap was an important step towards increasing councils’ ability to provide essential housing needs for their residents. While austerity still creates challenges for councils already stretched to their limit, it was a movement in the right direction, and one that the LGA has been lobbying the government on for a number of years. This will help increase the financial autonomy of councils, and will lead to more council housing being built, allowing councils to play an important part in tackling the housing and homelessness crisis. Following the removal of the cap, 89% percent of councils say they are considering increasing their level of house building. The LGA has continued to engage with councils on the HRA by providing support and advice where needed.

The political climate over the last few years has meant that many councillors have felt uncomfortable having their home addresses published. Following feedback from councillors, the LGA has worked with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to remove the home addresses of councillors from ballot papers and in early 2019 the Government amended election rules to eliminate this requirement.

It was great to see the concerns of councillors taken on board as a result of LGA lobbying, with a step in the right direction finally being taken to improve the security and safety of councillors and first time candidates alike. The LGA will continue to work hard to ensure that the role of a councillor is as accessible and safe as possible.

Despite the crisis in adult social care, the Government continued to kick their long-awaited adult social care green paper into the long grass. In summer 2018, the LGA took control of the agenda by publishing its own green paper on adult social care, alongside extensive stakeholder engagement on the issue. The green paper focused on the key role of local councils in delivering adult social care, and provided a road map towards reform. It called for the closure of the social care spending gap, for local areas to have more power in allocating any new funds, and for a panel of people with lived experience in adult social care to be part of future decisions on the topic. After nearly a decade of spending cuts that have put vital social care services at risk, our green paper proposed local centric, effective reform based upon comprehensive research and evidence from local councils.

It’s been a busy year for the LGA and for all of our member councils, and all of this work has happened in an environment of Brexit and continued austerity, both of which have placed continued pressure on local government. It promises to be another busy year ahead, and the LGA will continue to work with local authorities and represent their views and needs to national government.
The 2019 local elections comprising 8,425 seats in 248 councils were largely re-running the set of contests which took place on General Election day in 2015 when David Cameron won his unexpected parliamentary majority.

Off the back of that the Conservatives had also won a big victory in the local elections, winning majority control of the overwhelming majority of district councils. Their gains on a higher turnout swept away much that was left of the Liberal Democrats’ representation following their 2011 losses and many independents, leaving them with almost or in some cases no opposition across much of southern England.

There was bound to be some correction to that but the scale of Tory fragmentation exceeded anything that anyone had anticipated. They had a net loss of 1,325 seats out of the 4,900 which they had won when these seats were previously contested. They lost their majority in 50 councils, offset with three gains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results summary</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Actual changes – unchanged wards</th>
<th>Net changes with notional result in New Ward Councils</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>2,018</td>
<td>-38</td>
<td>-42</td>
<td>-80</td>
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<td>Lib Dem</td>
<td>1,351</td>
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<td>+242</td>
<td>+697</td>
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<td>-461</td>
<td>-1,325</td>
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<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
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<td>-109</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>+120</td>
<td>+54</td>
<td>+174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,410</td>
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The Projected National Share of the vote showed Labour and the Conservatives neck and neck on 28%, the lowest joint share for the two main parties of any year with the exception of 2013, and the story of the election was of big gains for the Liberal Democrats and independents. Had they, and the Greens and others, stood more candidates the Tory losses would almost certainly have been worse. It is true to say that in some authorities at least the electorate wanted to vote for literally anyone else.

There was thought to be some pattern to the results. The vast majority of the Lib Dem gains were in places where they have a history of representation, many in councils which they had run at some point between 1995 and 2010. They were ahead in votes in many parliamentary constituencies which they held currently and previously. They gained a majority in 11 councils and became the largest party in several others.

Almost 1,200 independent, Resident and minor party candidates were elected out of 2,700 standing, proving the readiness of voters to seek any alternative. Where any of these parties was already established, as with “It’s Our County” in Herefordshire and “Residents for Uttlesford”, they often had almost all their candidates elected, but many independents won with almost no profile.

Many of these trends also affected Labour, with independent gains mainly responsible for the loss of councils like Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Bolsover. The five Labour council gains included High Peak, Calderdale and Trafford, all places where there had been significant swings in 2017 while Labour seat gains also contributed to Tory council losses in parliamentary marginals like Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea and Broxtowe. A number of councils including East Hampshire, East Hertfordshire, Hambleton, Malvern Hills and Waverley elected their first Labour councillors in many years. Labour also gained the Mansfield mayoralty.

The Tories are now left with about 7,500 councillors, down from over 9,000, partly due to restructuring which has abolished several authorities and reduced the numbers in others. There are 143 councils with a Conservative majority, 97 Labour and 23 Liberal Democrat.
The LGA Labour Group

Executive Team 2018/19

Leadership team:

Cllr Nick Forbes
(Newcastle)
Leader of the Labour Group
and Vice-Chair of the LGA

Cllr Lib Peck
(Lambeth)
Deputy Leader, Labour Group

Cllr Michael Payne
(Gedling & Nottinghamshire)
Deputy Leader, Labour Group

Cllr Simon Henig
(Durham)
Chair Labour Group and Chair ALC

Cllr Simon Blackburn
(Blackpool)
Chief Whip

Cllr Rishi Shori
(Bury)
Vice-Chair

Cllr Alice Perry
(Islington)
Deputy Whip

Cllr Sir Steve Houghton
(Barnsley)
Lead Member Peer

LGA Board Leads:

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble
(Hackney)
Chair, Children & Young People Board

Cllr Sir Richard Leese
(Manchester)
Chair, City Regions Board

Cllr Paulette Hamilton
(Birmingham)
Vice-Chair, Community Wellbeing Board

Cllr Richard Watts
(Islington)
Chair, Children & Young People Board

Cllr Rishi Shori
(Bury)
Vice-Chair, Culture, Tourism, and Sport Board

Cllr Judith Blake
(Leeds)
Vice-Chair, Environment, Economy,
Housing and Transport Board

Fiona Twycross AM
(Greater London Authority)
Deputy Chair, Fire Services
Management Committee

Cllr Judi Billing
(North Hertfordshire & Hertfordshire)
Deputy Chair, Improvement & Innovation Board

Cllr Simon Henig
(Durham)
Deputy Chair, People and Places Board

Cllr Richard Watts
(Islington)
Chair, Resources Board

Cllr Simon Blackburn
(Blackpool)
Chair, Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Regional Representatives:

East Midlands:
Cllr Tom Beattie
(Corby)

Eastern:
Cllr Richard Henry
(Stevenage)

London:
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble
(Hackney)

North East:
Cllr Iain Malcolm
(South Tyneside)

North West:
Cllr John Merry
(Salford)

South East:
Cllr Sabia Hussain
(Slough)

South West:
Cllr Kate Haigh
(Gloucester & Gloucestershire)

Wales:
Cllr Rob Stewart
(Swansea)

West Midlands:
Cllr Paulette Hamilton
(Birmingham)

Yorkshire and Humberside:
Cllr Tim Swift
(Calderdale)
As continued austerity tips more councils towards breaking point, it is of little surprise that funding has once again dominated the work of the Resources Board in the last year.

The LGA worked hard this year to increase the public profile of the damage caused by cuts to councils. Brexit makes it challenging to push news stories on other matters, but I believe public awareness of the financial problems councils face is the highest it’s been thanks to several important interventions the LGA has made in the last year.

The LGA Labour Group ‘Breaking Point’ campaign has been a focal point of our political call to fund local government properly. A highlight of the campaign was leading a hardy group of campaigners to Sidcup, taking the campaign directly into James Brokenshire’s constituency.

When I became Chair of the Resources Board in June 2018, I also took on chairing the LGA’s Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention Task and Finish Group. This leads the LGA’s detailed work to see how much consensus can be reached on the details of council funding and business rates reforms. I am pleased that this work led to the LGA unanimously agreeing that deprivation must be included in the core element of the new local government funding formula, a strong rebuke of the Government’s current plan, which will negatively affect funding for many Labour councils. There is continued concern that the so-called Fair Funding Review will be a stitch-up that transfers substantial funds from the most deprived areas of the country to the most affluent.

The Board also raised member concerns about the impact of Universal Credit on the communities we represent, and I have also chaired the group of councils working to establish a local government owned mutual.

An important part of my work this year has been speaking with colleagues from across the country about the challenges they are facing concerning resources. If anyone has any issues they wish to discuss with me, please do get in touch.

This year the Board helped shape the LGA’s response to the Government’s Resources and Waste Strategy. While we welcomed the proposal to shift responsibility for packaging waste back onto packaging manufacturers, we were also clear that any move to place more responsibilities on councils, such as weekly food waste collections, must be fully funded by central government.

In housing, we were pleased LGA lobbying for the removal of the borrowing cap has finally paid off. This will help councils borrow more to build good quality and affordable council homes, something that is an absolutely essential part of the solution to the chronic housing crisis facing our country. However, we were also clear that removing the cap is only part of the solution, in that councils also need to be able to retain 100 per cent of Right to Buy receipts and set discounts locally to ensure they can replace homes sold through Right to Buy.

In transport, the main work of the board has been on the LGA’s response to the Williams Review. The review was requested by the government following the significant failures in the rail industry over recent years. While Labour members pushed for the response to include a demand for rail re-nationalisation, the main thrust of the Board’s response was to request improvements to how the rail industry interacts with local authorities, as well as the need for new rail industry structures to promote greater accountability. The response did however also include support for councils to have greater influence over the rail industry through devolved mechanisms.

Also in transport, the Board was clear that Electric Vehicles have a big role to play in meeting future transport needs. As such, we were keen to focus on how the LGA can help councils ensure they provide the charging infrastructure needed for the change to Electric Vehicles. LGA guidance will be produced for members that explains the technology and how it is expected to develop, as well as the economic and environmental case for installing it.
The last year has been one of consolidation, embedding change in systems, and ensuring that councils and communities have been able to learn from and adapt to the world following the Grenfell Tower fire and the multiple terror attacks in 2017.

Working with colleagues in the Police, Security Services and the Home Office, we are exploring ways of councils supporting the work that these agencies do to protect the public. It must be more than simply building physical barriers to prevent further attacks. I and other colleagues have led a number of workshops where officers and councillors have discussed what more can be done locally, and in partnership, to create and nurture cohesive communities, where residents of different faiths and ideologies can exist aside one another and hold each other’s views to be worthy.

In May, the Government announced a £200 million fund to assist in the removal of ACM cladding from privately owned high rise developments. This is largely due to the work of officers and members of the Board and the Fire Services Management Committee, and our outgoing Chairman, Lord Porter.

Councillor Alan Rhodes has redoubled our sector’s efforts to tackle Modern Slavery, Councillor James Dawson has continued to support our work around drowning prevention, and Councillor Judith Wallace has led our work in protecting residents from scams and fraud.

I work closely with Ministers, civil servants, Sadiq Khan and London Councils on the issue of violent crime, not least due to the recent growth of knife crime. A recent visit to the inspiring Ben Kinsella Trust highlighted the tragic consequences of knife crime.

We shall be working alongside the Government on the Domestic Abuse Bill, whilst continuing our work on preventing Female Genital Mutilation, and the wider issues around Violence Against Women and Girls.

I would like to place on record my thanks to all Board members, especially my Vice Chair, Councillor Morris Bright MBE, and Deputy Chairs Councillor Anita Lower and Councillor Hannah Dalton, and to the superb team of Policy Advisors and Communications staff who support me and the Board in our work.

The City Regions Board was established to give a strong voice for urban policy and two major pieces of work carried out by the board over the past year reflect that.

The first is the establishment of the Urban Leadership campaign. There are an increasing number of players in the urban policy field including different groups of local authorities, think tanks, and lobbyists and the board became increasingly concerned that as we go into both comprehensive spending and local government funding reviews, the urban voice would become divided and weakened. The campaign aims to bring together that plethora of urban policy voices to develop a common, shared agenda.

The second relates directly to the ‘Fair’ Funding Review. The LGA Executive has unanimously adopted a position that deprivation should be a factor in any future funding formula and that the weighting attached to it should be evidence based. The Board has commissioned research work examining comparative need to spend in urban areas to be part of the evidence base to underpin the case for the relative weighting of both deprivation and density in council funding.

The Board has continued to make the case for devolution and to support the provision of practical support to areas on the devolution journey including Mayoral Combined Authorities. One important piece of work has been done jointly with rural colleagues through a Skills Task Force. This aims to keep Work Local, our plan for a devolved and decentralised approach to skills and employment, on the political agenda. A series of round tables have brought a wide range of stakeholders together including business and trade union organisations, the voluntary sector, think tanks, colleges, universities, other education and skills providers to explore the common ground that exists and to add weight to our case-making and lobbying.

Other areas we have spent time on include Brexit, particularly the governance implications of various Brexit scenarios, local industrial strategies and the LEP review and the development of devolved, place-based approaches to international trade and investment.
Demand for children’s services has never been higher – with a child referred to a local authority every 49 seconds – but resources have never been so scarce. There is now a £3 billion funding gap.

My Labour colleagues on the Board have been working tirelessly to champion the role of local authorities in supporting children and young people, and to make sure that they are properly funded in order to do this. The innovative work carried out by Labour councils with young people is transforming lives, and it has been a privilege to showcase their achievements through the work of the Board.

We have stood in solidarity with our trade union colleagues, especially the National Education Union, with over 1,000 councillors nationwide signing a petition urging the Education Secretary Damien Hinds to end the school funding crisis. Almost a third of council-run schools and eight in ten academies are in deficit – a damning indictment of the effects of fragmentation of the school system through academisation. Our Board continues to argue that schools should be subject to local oversight and accountability.

This year the Board has highlighted the injustice of the Government’s budget for young people. 95% of central Government funding for youth services is going to a single short-term programme, the National Citizen Service, whilst the year-round youth services required are desperately underfunded.

We were pleased that our efforts to secure more funding for vulnerable children saw the government stump-up £350 million for Special Educational Needs services, but the total funding gap for SEND is still £1.6 billion by 2021. This was because once again, the Tories passed more responsibility onto councils without adequate resources.

It’s been a busy year for the Community Wellbeing Board, with adult social care and public health both high up the local government agenda.

The social care system is being placed under huge strain by both an ageing population and working age adults living with more complex needs. The amount it costs councils to pay for care per week is increasing and there is a growing staffing crisis in social care. There is little evidence that the Government understands or is willing to act on these trends despite the impact that this is having on those using the social care system.

Over the last year, local government has heard many pledges to reform social care and is still waiting for the adult social care green paper, promised by the current government. The Board heard from Matt Hancock MP, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. He spoke passionately about his commitment to social care, and he restated his commitment to the role of local government in social care. It is important that the integration of social care isn’t lost in the NHS long term plan, and Board members pressed the Secretary of State on this.

Local government’s role in public health was also a priority for the Board. We’ve discussed topics such as the effectiveness of Health and Wellbeing Boards, and looked at the implications of the NHS Long Term plan on public health and mental health provision. We’ve also looked at the impact that the phasing out of the Public Health grant as part of the Business Rates retention scheme will have on the ability of local authorities to deliver public health services.

The Labour members of the Community Wellbeing Board heard from Barbara Keeley MP, Shadow Minister for Social Care, and Sharon Hodgson MP, Shadow Public Health Minister in our Board pre meets. This has allowed for a dialogue between Labour’s front bench and Labour councillors to help inform Labour’s policy making process and to ensure that local government has a strong voice within the Labour Party.
Fire Service Management Committee

During the last year, the Fire Service Management Committee (FSMC) has continued to consider the implications of the Grenfell Tower Fire. From looking at the implementation of the Dame Judith Hackitt review, to looking at resourcing implications, members are determined to ensure both that fire safety remains high on the political agenda and that the fire sector can meet the challenges we face.

Learning and sharing best practice

The first tranche of reports from the new inspection regime, led by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), make it clear that the inspectorate has observed that there are still entrenched cultural issues particularly around diversity and inclusion. With some challenging questions posed by HMICFRS, the FSMC is looking at ways the sector can move forward and learn from the process, particularly in increasing the sharing of best practice between fire and rescue services at member level. Members have led Diversity Masterclasses across the country to share best practice and are working with the LGA to define how Peer Reviews can assist in addressing this and other issues raised in the first tranche of inspection reports.

Making the case for investment

Members continue to campaign against cuts to the sector. We have been working with the National Fire Chiefs’ Council and with the Home Office to make the case for fire and rescue services as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Fire deaths are plateauing and unless we see government investment in prevention, we will fail to see the step change needed for the next significant reduction in what are often preventable deaths.

Partnership working

Members continue to be involved in the work of several outside bodies and working groups. Their contribution has been invaluable in developing fire policy both inside and outside the LGA. I’d like to thank all members of the Labour Group on FSMC and on the Fire Commission for their work in trying to drive forward improvements in the sector.

People and Places

The People and Places Board comprises representatives of areas outside the main cities and metropolitan areas, mainly from County and District councils.

The Board is chaired and numerically dominated by the Conservatives, which reflects this becoming very challenging electoral terrain for Labour over a number of years, although it remains a key electoral battleground at the national level.

Key issues discussed over the year have been dominated by Brexit, notably the Board’s Post Brexit England Commission which has held workshops across each region to listen to views on what needs to change after we exit the EU. Many Labour representatives at these workshops have focused on the economic impact and challenges of leaving, where there remain substantial concerns. The overall reports have also focussed on a number of other challenges including tackling the skills gap, building more affordable housing, better digital connectivity, health and wellbeing and improving transport provision and infrastructure.

Other areas of the Board’s remit have been slowed by the dominance of debates over Brexit at a national level. We continue to be concerned about the seeming lack of progress on devolution outside of the main cities, the replacement of EU regional assistance with the government’s Shared Prosperity Fund, on which there were still no details at the time of writing, and the continued trend of handing over key local and regional decisions to unaccountable LEPs. Your Labour representatives will continue to press the Conservative board chair and government on these and other crucial issues.

Can I thank my colleagues Cllr Azhar Ali, Cllr Leigh Redman and Cllr Sue Woodward, ably supported by Cllr Alan Waters and Cllr Rosanne Kirk for their hard work and Martin Angus and the LGA group office for their continued support.
Labour councils continue to work hard in the face of year-on-year austerity to promote the arts, culture and sport across the country, work which has become even more critical given the ongoing uncertainties of Brexit.

One of the issues discussed and promoted by the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board this year has included a study of the impact of culture-led and regeneration across the country. One such example is work done by Knowsley Council and the creation of the Shakespeare North Playhouse. This £20 million project will not only create a new 350 seat theatre venue, but also hotel and micro-pub as well as the provision of educational opportunities. A great example of a Labour council innovating in challenging financial times.

The Board has also considered the important issue of a future Tourism Levy and provided input into a submission to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Hospitality. The key elements highlighted that the introduction of such a levy should be discretionary; all revenue generated should be re-invested locally; and any revenue generated is not used to offset other forms of local taxation such as business rates.

Another key workstream of the Board this year has been to look at the linkages between Culture, Tourism and Sport and the agenda of social prescribing and looking at how there can be much greater co-ordination between health colleagues, local authorities and the third sector to encourage improved health and wellbeing.

I would like to thank all of the Labour members of the board for their continued hard work throughout the year: Faye Abbott (Coventry), Muhammed Butt (Brent), Richard Henry (Stevenage), Brigid Jones (Birmingham), Terry O’Neill (Warrington) and Dhanisha Patel (Bridgend) as well as our substitute member, Guy Nicholson (Hackney).

Can I also thank Martin Angus and all colleagues in the LGA Labour group office for their continued support.

I am proud to represent the LGA Labour Group as Vice Chair on the Improvement and Innovation Board, and especially in bringing my experience to the Leadership Team to develop and improve the content, quality and accessibility of programmes and events for councillors.

This year we were able to pilot the first national, cross party events for women which were very well attended and enjoyed. The Leadership Academy has been held almost 200 times since 1999, and as ever the Next Generation programmes have been well received.

In the area of community engagement and participation the excellent New Conversations research and case study toolkit has been re-designed and re-launched after another good collaboration between the LGA and the Campaign Company.

This year has seen some tough conversations in peer challenges and general support work whilst councils have struggled with continued austerity. The focus has been on serious financial challenges and poor children’s services and adult social care.

The Innovation Zone at LGA Conference highlighted examples of good, imaginative practice from councils. There has been interest from member councils for slots in the Zone this summer, and I look forward to welcoming colleagues and participating in the activity.

This year the Chairman changed again, and Peter Fleming returned to the Chair. My thanks are due to all the LGA staff who interact with the Board for their professionalism, support and expertise.

This year, I have struggled with some health problems and they have also been exceedingly kind, understanding and helpful.

We have a truly excellent team of Labour councillors as members and subs on the board this year. So my huge thanks to Tudor Evans, Joy Allen, Alice Perry, Vince Maple, Abdul Jabbar, Amy Cross, Olivia Blake, Jason Brock and Phil Davies. We are particularly sad that Phil stood down in May, and we’ll miss him on the board and in local government.
Training and support for Labour Councillors

The LGA Labour Group has provided a range of training and support to Labour councillors during the past year and will continue to do so in the year ahead. In particular our training has focused on:

Next Generation

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Cllr Asma Begum
(Tower Hamlets)

I became a councillor in May 2014, representing Bow West Ward in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Later, I became the Cabinet Member for Culture in June 2015 following Mayor John Biggs’s by-election. I was required to adapt quickly, as I got used to councillor duties and also having recently given birth.

I took advantage of lots of different development opportunities and was encouraged to apply for the Next Generation program. The sound of three weekends away seemed daunting at first but it has been the best decision I have made in my development as a councillor. The weekends were intense learning experiences but were incredibly engaging and informative.

It has equipped me with the tools I need to be the best I can be in my role as Deputy Mayor, a Cabinet Member and as Deputy Leader of our Labour Group. The network you build, the resources you have access to and the frank conversation you have with your counterparts from across the country is invaluable.

It has been less than six months since I took part in the course and already I have called upon the friends I have made, asking for support on running council services, motions to our Labour Group and Full Council meetings, and political insight.

I couldn’t recommend the course more. If you are given the opportunity to take part, grab it, as you will not regret it.

Be a Councillor

Cllr Naushabah Khan
(Medway)

In the past year, the LGA Labour Group has continued to work with the Labour Party and affiliated organisations on the ‘Be A Councillor’ project. Our workshops have been featured at the Labour Party Annual Conference as well as at regional conferences and other events. I have assisted the LGA Labour Group in delivering some of the ‘Be A Councillor’ programmes, which were effective and well attended.

The workshops have enabled party members to participate in discussions on what is required to be a Labour councillor, alongside hearing the personal experiences of councillors leading in local government. We had over 50 people attend our workshop at South East regional conference which was delivered by Cllr Christopher Hammond, Leader of Southampton City Council and myself. I also ran a session at Labour’s Women’s Conference in February 2019 with Cllr Jackie Taylor from Sandwell, where there were well over 100 women in attendance.

In addition to these sessions, over the past 12 months the LGA Labour Group has also booked stands to exhibit at multiple regional Labour Party conferences and events. We saw great attendance at these events as well, often speaking to over 100 people in a day. We also managed to get a number of the parliamentary front bench to engage with the ‘Be A Councillor’ campaign and support the road to becoming a Labour councillors, and had lots of interest and good conversations with members about the role of councillors.

The Labour Group has continued to target under-represented groups. An event was held for BAME women in the North West which will be repeated, as well as partnering with LGBT Labour to hold a ‘Be A Councillor’ event aimed at party members who identify as transgender.

If you would like further information about the ‘Be A Councillor’ campaign, please contact Martin Angus in the LGA Labour Group Office.
The Association of Labour Councillors (ALC) is a Labour Party affiliated organisation with the aim of enabling Labour in Local Government to speak with one unified voice and effectively lobby and input into the national Labour Party structure. The ALC executive has been an important voice in the creation of Labour Party local government policy since 2013 and will continue this role moving forward.

Last September’s Annual Conference saw an expanded programme of local government focused events and training. Alongside the annual Local Government reception on the Sunday evening, training sessions ran across the week aimed at opposition councillors, young councillors and those looking to stand for office in the future. The ALC also linked up with external organisations to put on discussions, working with the Red Cross to look at how local authorities work with the voluntary sector in responding to UK emergencies and a session on mental health with trainers from Mind. We continued to have a dedicated local government lounge at conference, providing a space for councillors at conference to meet and share best practice.

The ALC also submitted a contemporary motion to conference, emphasising that the party must include housing as an absolute priority at the next general election, and continue to make the case set out in the 2017 manifesto for radical measures to fix the crisis. Local government will have a major role to play in delivering any manifesto commitments around housing and it is important we are involved as equal partners.

We held another successful Local Government conference with the LGA Labour Group in February, attracting over 400 councillors to the event held at Warwick University. New councillors were once again able to attend for free, and something we will continue to offer in the years ahead. In addition to plenary sessions in the main hall on Women & Equalities and Councils at Breaking Point, we had keynote speeches from Jeremy Corbyn MP, Angela Rayner MP and Cllr Nick Forbes, with ALC Chair Cllr Simon Henig closing the conference. The ALC breakout sessions this year were focused on the ongoing Local Government review, where councillors had an opportunity to hear more and give feedback and a session put on by the Party’s Community Organising team.

March saw the launch of Labour’s local election campaign in Stoke on Trent, with members of the Shadow Cabinet and our National Campaign Co-ordinators Andrew Gwynne MP and Ian Lavery MP. Continuing on from last year, local government, through the ALC and LGA Labour Group and Group Leaders, had the opportunity to regularly feed in to the local election campaign.

Many thanks to Niall Sookoo (Executive Director, Elections, Organising & Community Organising) for facilitating these regular meetings during the campaign, which are so vitally important. We would also like to welcome to the ALC those new councillors who were elected for the first time, and give our thanks to those who are no longer councillors following the elections.

The ALC continue to provide councillors with a range of support, resources and training to supplement the work of Labour councillors throughout the year. One of the main areas of improvement has been our dedicated councillor only online hub (at www.labour.org.uk/councillors). Launched last year as the home of all our resources and training, it has continued to be added to, with a section dedicated to supporting Labour Groups who have a by-election and a section focused on councillor mental health and wellbeing added over the last year. Mental health has been a real focus of the exec after feedback from councillors. At Local Government Conference, ALC Executive Chair Simon Henig was able to announce, in addition to the new section on the website, a pilot training session with Mental Health First Aid England, taking place this summer with councillors in the North West. We hope to run more of these sessions going forward and welcome feedback on what more we can be doing.

In addition, all of our Labour councillors continue to have access to legal insurance, support and representation on standards and legal matters when they need it. You can access support by calling 0870 890 3778 or by email at frances.randle@steelandshamash.co.uk.

If you have any thoughts on how we can improve the service we offer to councillors please contact the local government team at councillors@labour.org.uk.

**ALC Executive Elections**

The regional representative places on the ALC executive will once again be up for election over the summer. All Labour councillors are eligible to take part in the election and you should have started to receive communications about this. You can contact the Local Government team at councillors@labour.org.uk if you have any questions. The new executive will begin their term after Annual Conference with results being announced shortly before.
The LGA Labour Group exists to fight the corner for Labour councillors at a national level, both within the cross-party Local Government Association and with the Labour Party at Westminster. The Group provides a strong voice for Labour councillors and acts as a platform for ideas and argument for all those committed to an effective localist element to Labour politics and policies.

The LGA Labour Group has good working relationships with the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Party Head Office, and holds frequent meetings, events and workshops with Labour councillors across the country. We influence policy and political decisions through communications, publications and regular meetings between our leading members and senior national politicians.

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