

# first

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the magazine for local government



## Autumn Budget

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Lord Porter, LGA Chairman

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# TEST RISK CHANGE

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**Andrew Gwynne MP**, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

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## Budget news



The Chancellor's first Autumn Budget dominates this edition of **first**, with news stories and a two-page digest of the LGA's on-the-day briefing (p12).

The Budget came hard on the heels of our most successful #OurDay tweetathon yet, when hundreds of you took to Twitter to let the world know about all the amazing and ordinary things you do every day to make life better for your local residents (p14). Thank you to everyone who took part.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we have some new research on health and wellbeing boards (p16) and how they are providing a place-based focus for health and care issues.

There is an update on the LGA's work on Brexit (p15) and on our annual winter gritting survey (p18).

Councils can find out how to reduce their fuel costs, courtesy of the LGA's energy procurement strategy (p19), and we also take a look at what we should all be doing to prepare for changes to data protection regulations (p20).

Our lead comment this month is from the think tank Reform, which wants to see the commissioning of health and work-related services devolved from central government.

As ever, let us know what you want to see in **first** by emailing [first@local.gov.uk](mailto:first@local.gov.uk) **Lord Porter** is Chairman of the LGA

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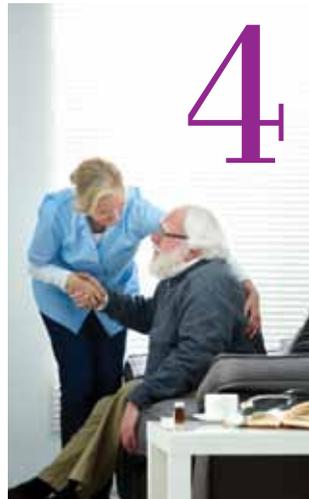
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# news



## No cash for social care in Budget

**The LGA has voiced its disappointment over the lack of any new funding in the Autumn Budget for adult social care.**

The Chancellor instead announced an extra £2.8 billion in day-to-day funding over three years for the NHS, plus a further £10 billion in capital investment.

The LGA said it was a “completely false economy” to put money into the NHS but not adult social care.

The Government also committed to funding pay awards as part of a pay deal for NHS staff, including nurses, midwives and paramedics. This will see new pay deals on the basis it improves productivity within the health service.

Meanwhile, part of the capital funding will go to sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs) to deliver more integrated care for patients, extra care out of hospital and to reduce waiting times.

The LGA said it was “deeply disappointing” that the Government had found more money for the NHS, but not chosen to invest in adult social care.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said: “This sends a message that if you need social care, you should go to hospital.

“If the Government wants to reduce the

pressures on the health service and keep people out of hospital in the first place, then it needs to tackle the chronic underfunding of care and support services in the community, which are at a tipping point.”

As well as addressing the annual £2.3 billion funding gap facing adult social care by 2020, the LGA said the Government also needed to reverse the cuts to councils’ public health budgets.

Meanwhile, the Government has announced that its Green Paper on adult social care, expected this year, will now be published next summer. Ahead of this, it plans to hold a series of engagement sessions with the sector.

Cllr Seccombe said: “While this shows government recognises the need for long-term reform, this does nothing to address the immediate pressures older and disabled people are facing. Those who desperately rely on care and support on a daily basis cannot be left to make do while waiting for yet another review. They want action now.

“As a minimum, government needs to plug the social care funding gap urgently to ensure services can keep on running and stop providers going bust, while we have the bigger conversation around how we secure a long-term sustainable future for social care.”

## news in brief

### Delayed transfers

Delays in transferring patients out of hospital attributable to social care are down 7.2 per cent since July, when councils were set targets for reductions by government. NHS delays are down 3.4 per cent, according to official figures. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said: “This is testament to the huge ongoing efforts by councils to get people out of hospital and back into the community, close to their loved ones. However, councils have been told that next year’s social care funding will be reviewed in light of delayed transfers of care performance. They need urgent clarity and greater transparency around how this will be judged, and the implications for local services.”

### NICs to fund care?

An increase of just 1 per cent in National insurance contributions would generate up to £5 billion extra for social care – and would be more progressive and politically achievable than alternatives such as means testing winter fuel payments or scrapping the ‘triple lock’ on pensions, according to research from the think tank IPPR and the charity Independent Age. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said: “This new research illustrates the difficult, brave and possibly even controversial decision-making that will be required to secure the long-term future of care and support. It is essential that ideas for reform of this magnitude are brought to the table for consideration.”

### Excess deaths

The squeeze on public finances since 2010 is linked to nearly 120,000 excess deaths in England, with the over-60s and care home residents bearing the brunt, according to a study published in the online journal BMJ Open. Researchers compared actual death rates for 2011 and 2014 with those that would be expected, based on trends before spending cuts came into play, and taking account of national and economic factors, such as unemployment rates and pensions.

# Local services let down by the Budget

The Budget's lack of funding for councils to plug the financial black hole facing local services is "hugely disappointing", the LGA has said.

There were no announcements on adult social care and children's services, which remain significantly underfunded (see p4 and p7). Instead, the NHS is to receive an extra £6.3 billion.

However, there was some positive news on housing, with Chancellor Philip Hammond lifting the housing borrowing cap for councils in areas with 'high affordability' pressures (see below), further government investment in housing infrastructure and a pledge to build 300,000 new homes a year.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: "It is hugely disappointing that the Budget offered nothing to ease the financial crisis facing local services.

"Funding gaps and rising demand for our adult social care and children's services are threatening the vital services which care for our elderly and disabled, protect children and support families. This is also having a huge knock-on effect on other services our communities rely on.

"Almost 60p in every £1 that people pay in council tax could have to be spent caring for children and adults by 2020, leaving increasingly less to fund other services, like repairing potholes, cleaning streets and running leisure centres and libraries.

"Adult social care services are essential to keeping people out of hospital and living independent, dignified lives at home and in the community, and alleviating the pressure on the NHS. Simply investing more money into the NHS, while not addressing the funding crisis in adult social care, is not going to help our joint efforts to prevent people having to go into hospital in the first place.

"The money local government has to run services is running out fast and councils face an overall £5.8 billion funding gap in just two years. The Government needs to use the upcoming local government finance settlement to set out its plan for how it will fund local services both now and in the future.

"We remain clear that local government as a whole must be able to keep every penny of business rates collected to plug funding gaps, while a fairer system of distributing funding between councils is needed."

## Housing borrowing cap eased

The Chancellor's move to lift the housing borrowing cap for councils in 'high affordability' areas from 2019 is a significant victory for those councils.

But the Government needs to go much further and extend this measure across the country, if it is serious about tackling the country's housing shortage, the LGA has warned.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: "We have long called for councils to be given greater freedom to borrow to build new homes, and the Autumn Budget has taken a step towards that by lifting the housing borrowing cap for some councils.

"This is an important recognition of our argument about the vital role that councils must play to boost homes for local families in need and solve our housing crisis, but does not go far enough."

Earlier in the month, the Government reclassified housing associations as private organisations, removing £66 billion from the public debt book and freeing them to borrow to build. The LGA has consistently called for all councils to benefit from similar



measures, to trigger a much-needed renaissance in council house building.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "It is vital that the Government also lifts the cap on the amount councils can borrow to build homes and remove that borrowing from contributing to the national debt. That is essential to provide a sustainable long-term financial framework for councils to invest in desperately needed new homes.

"All social housing must be treated the same and council house building must be part of the solution, if we are to stand any chance of solving our chronic housing shortage."



## Planning reforms proposed

A raft of measures geared towards reforming the planning system so that houses can be built more quickly was announced in last month's Autumn Budget.

Former Cabinet Minister Oliver Letwin will chair a review looking at addressing the gap between planning permissions granted and the number of houses actually started.

If the review finds that land is being held back from the market for commercial reasons, Chancellor Philip Hammond pledged that the Government would intervene to make such land available "using direct intervention compulsory purchase powers, as necessary".

Mr Hammond also unveiled £2.7 billion in funding for the Housing Infrastructure Fund, and measures to encourage small and medium-sized builders to play a larger role in the housing market.

The LGA is adamant that planning is not a barrier to housing growth.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "Councils approve nine out of 10 applications and are doing all they can to deliver affordable homes with wider local services and infrastructure.

"The single biggest measure that the Government could take to speed up the planning process would be to cover the cost to councils of processing applications.

"The LGA has also consistently called for councils to have the powers to make sure that sites that receive planning permission become homes in our communities.

"We look forward to contributing to the forthcoming Letwin Review, and will make a vigorous case for councils to be given the strongest powers possible to make sure that developers are held to account."

The Government also announced that councils will be able to double the amount they can charge the owners of empty properties, raising the current premium from 50 per cent to 100 per cent of council tax.

Cllr Tett said: "Allowing councils to charge more for empty homes is another positive step, but we'd like the Government to go further and give councils more flexibility on other council tax discounts and valuation bands."

## news in brief

### Broadband ads

Broadband speed advertising standards are to be beefed up and become more transparent, after calls for improvements by the LGA. The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) said broadband speed claims should be based on the download speed available to at least 50 per cent of customers at peak times and described as 'average'. Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "These long overdue changes are the fairest, most transparent measure to help residents know what they are getting when choosing a broadband package. We urge the CAP to ensure these standards are adhered to across all broadband products, including those targeted at businesses."

### Diesel scrappage

Greener transport measures announced in the Budget, including tax changes and a £220 million Clean Air Fund, are a step in the right direction, according to the LGA. But it also wants to see a national diesel scrappage scheme and further clarity on how the infrastructure required for electric vehicles will be provided. Transport Spokesman Cllr Martin Tett said: "This will enable us to make the transition to greener vehicles easier for car owners, and deliver cleaner air for our residents."

### Universal credit

A £1.5 billion package to improve how universal credit is implemented will address some issues, but councils still need to be fully funded to help pay for the benefit changes. Cllr Claire Kober, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said the new package should allow councils to ensure fewer claimants get into financial difficulty at the start of their claim, but that councils need funding for the administrative support and changes that the measures will entail. The Budget measures "do not fully address the widening gap between people's incomes and outgoings, and the resulting pressures on council budgets and services that are presenting real challenges to local authorities", she added.



## New devo deal announced

### The first new devolution deal in 20 months has been announced as part of the Chancellor's Autumn Budget.

The Government has said it is minded to approve a devolution deal with the North of Tyne authorities (Newcastle, Northumbria and North Tyneside), subject to the consent of local partners. This would see £600 million of investment in the region over 30 years and create a new mayor, elected in 2019, with devolved powers, including planning and skills.

A second devolution deal in principle was also announced with the West Midlands Mayor and Combined Authority to address local productivity barriers. This includes £6 million for a housing delivery taskforce, £5 million for a construction skills training scheme and a £250 million allocation from the Transforming Cities fund, to be spent on local intra-city transport priorities.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said the announcement was "encouraging", but added: "Many more such deals are needed to reverse the growing sense of stalled progress and missed opportunities across much of the country."

"The longer it takes to secure new devolution deals, the longer communities will have to wait to benefit from the opportunities currently available to areas where devolution has taken place."

"These include having greater powers and funding to improve local transport, housing, health and social care, and to equip local people with the skills they need to secure employment and prosper."

The LGA is also calling for more detail on the common devolution framework proposed in the Conservative manifesto, and asking that the annual devolution report required by statute be published.

## LHA freeze risks more homeless

Homelessness is at risk of increasing unless the freeze on local housing allowance (LHA) for families in the private rented sector is lifted, the LGA has warned.

The LHA is paid to low-income families in privately rented homes to help them cope with high housing costs. The rate is currently frozen, despite private rents in England having risen by nearly 11 per cent in the past five years.

The LGA has said the Government's decision to accept its call not to apply the restrictions to social and supported housing is a crucial step forward.

However, it wants the freeze lifted in the private rented sector, after a council survey in which 96 per cent of responding councils said they were concerned that "homelessness would increase". Almost the same proportion (94 per cent) said it would be "more difficult to meet the requirements" of the new Homelessness Reduction Act if the LHA freeze is not lifted until 2020.

As rents go up, the freeze on the level of housing benefit makes private renting

less affordable for many families at risk of homelessness. In the survey, nine in 10 councils said private landlords in their area are renting fewer homes to low income households. Lifting the freeze on LHA rates and better aligning them with rents would reduce homelessness, according to 92 per cent of responding councils.

Councils are currently housing more than 77,000 homeless families in temporary accommodation, including more than 120,000 children.

Cllr Judith Blake, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "Councils want to end homelessness by preventing it happening in the first place. It is hugely positive that the Government has decided not to apply the LHA rate to families in social and supported housing."

"We should now take the important step to lift the LHA freeze for private renters and connect it with real rents, which will be a massive step towards achieving our national ambition to end homelessness."

# No extra cash for children's services

The lack of additional funding for children's services in the Autumn Budget is "extremely disappointing", and must be addressed in the local government finance settlement, the LGA has said.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The Government has been warned repeatedly that ongoing funding cuts have left councils struggling to give the support that vulnerable children and families need, with major charities and independent experts joining the LGA's call for additional resources to be provided urgently to help keep children safe.

"This vital service is rapidly becoming unsustainable. A further £2 billion funding gap will have opened up in just over two years' time, and this gap is likely to grow even larger unless immediate action is taken to address the growing demand for child protection services.

"Last year, 90 children entered care every single day. It was the biggest annual increase witnessed since 2013. Unless there is an injection of funding to support crucial early intervention services, many more vulnerable children and families will need formal support

from council child protection services in the years to come"

The LGA, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Children's Society, and National Children's Bureau signed a joint letter published in the Independent warning that children's social care is being "pushed to breaking point", with the number of children needing child protection plans nearly doubling over the past decade.

The letter concluded: "Our children and young people deserve better than the gradual decline of services – particularly those services that help children early – that have been shown to make a real difference to their lives."

The letter coincided with the publication of a report from The Children's Society, Action for Children and the National Children's Bureau, which concluded that government funding cuts are leaving councils with no option but to only help children in crisis. It also highlighted reductions in funding for early intervention.

**i** See [www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures](http://www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures) for the LGA's campaign on children's services



## National LGAs discuss Brexit

The opportunities and challenges presented by Brexit, funding pressures, devolution and housing were among the issues discussed by the leaders of the UK's four national local government associations at a recent meeting of the UK Local Government Forum in London. LGA Chairman Lord Porter, LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd and representatives of the LGA's four political groups hosted the meeting at its Smith Square headquarters. Pictured (from left) are Cllr Alison Evison, President of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; LGA Chairman Lord Porter; Cllr Debbie Wilcox, Leader of the Welsh LGA; and Alderman Arnold Hatch, President of the Northern Ireland LGA.

## news in brief

### Young in old people's homes

More than 3,000 disabled people under the age of 65 are living in care homes for older people in England, according to a survey from the MS Society. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Social care is about far more than just supporting our older citizens. It is about meeting a wide range of different support needs, affecting people of all ages. But without new money, the support provided to adults with learning disabilities and those other groups who have care needs will be seriously under threat."

### Culture fund

Councils must play a central role in determining how a new £2 million Cultural Development Fund is spent and distributed. Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said the fund, announced by Chancellor Philip Hammond, was "helpful" but that "further funding would genuinely make a difference in creating culture-led, place-based development in communities". He added: "Despite significant reductions in central government funding, councils have adopted innovative ways of supporting and boosting culture and heritage. This includes setting up trusts to run cultural services, co-locating libraries with other public services, and reaching new audiences through digital innovation."

### Industrial strategy

Funding for local skills and work programmes should be devolved to local government, the LGA has said, in advance of the Government's industrial strategy – expected to be published as **first** was going to press. Ministers need to recognise that councils are crucial to delivering inclusive economic growth that benefits all communities, but that this is being hindered by centralisation and scores of different, nationally controlled funding pots. Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "Simpler, fewer funding streams would help kick-start more projects more quickly."

See [www.local.gov.uk/work-local](http://www.local.gov.uk/work-local)



## Leisure centres 'need urgent investment'

The majority of council-owned sports halls and swimming pools risk becoming "old and tired" because cash-strapped councils are unable to afford the cost of refurbishments.

Councils are just about managing to keep leisure facilities running but, in many cases, these centres are coming to the end of their lifespan, according to the LGA.

Investment in leisure infrastructure would get more people physically active and help to tackle some of the major health issues facing the country, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Latest figures show that 58 per cent of sports halls and 60 per cent of swimming pools are now more than 20 years old. Nearly a quarter have not been refurbished in 20 years.

This follows years of funding cuts to councils' budgets where, between 2010 and 2020, local authorities will have seen reductions of £16 billion to their core government funding.

The LGA is calling for a £400 million funding pot to pay for improvements to infrastructure for health and wellbeing. This would allow councils to upgrade and renovate facilities to the standard needed to support healthy, active communities.

New funding from government is needed to avoid having to replace facilities completely, which could cost in the region of £1.5 billion further down the line.

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: "Leisure facilities are the cornerstone of a physically and mentally healthy community and are used by thousands of families every day.

"They get people active and keep them fit and healthy, which in itself is a major long-term cost saving for the country, as it prevents the need for treatment further down the line that, in turn, puts significant extra pressure on social care and NHS services.

"But no-one wants to go to a leisure centre that is old, tired and run down. Councils need the resources to offer the kind of high-standard, modern facilities that the public rightly expects, which, in turn, helps them keep fit and healthy."

## Fund fire services for 'elderly risk'

**Funding for fire and rescue services needs to address the greater risks posed by an ageing population, the LGA has warned.**

There has been a 22 per cent increase in the number of fire-related deaths involving those aged over 65 in the past two years. Generally, the risk of fire-related fatality increases with age, with those aged 80 and over at greatest risk of dying in a fire.

An increase in the number of people living in rented accommodation is also linked to a rise in residential fires.

With the over-85 population set to more than double by 2039 and the number of people renting privately forecast to rise, the LGA has called for socio-demographic risk factors linked to fires to be considered in government's funding of fire services.

The latest statistics show that, although the overall number of fires has fallen steadily, the rate of decline has slowed and certain types of fire have increased. This includes deliberate primary fires – those that involve

casualties or rescues – which have risen by 14 per cent to 22,032 in 2016/17, up from 19,369 in 2015/16.

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, said: "The fact that people are living longer is to be celebrated, but this presents a clear and additional risk to fire and rescue services that have had their funding cut by around 40 per cent over a four-year period.

"Projected rises in the elderly population, including those living alone, and the number of people living in privately rented homes will only increase the risk of more fires putting people's lives in danger.

"Despite an overall fall in fires following successful prevention work, certain types, such as deliberate primary fires, are on the rise, which is concerning.

"These trends present a growing risk factor and cannot be ignored. The fire service needs to be funded to risk, not demand, to ensure it can respond to unanticipated local and national events, such as the Grenfell Tower disaster."

## 'Worrying' smoke alarm failure rates

**A**lmost 40 per cent of battery-powered and 21 per cent of mains-powered smoke alarms failed to activate in residential fires in England in the past year.

The LGA is urging householders to regularly check that their smoke alarms are working, as industry statistics show that more than a fifth – 22 per cent – never test their alarms. One in 10 householders is without a working smoke alarm altogether.

The main reason for a smoke alarm failing to activate is the fire not reaching the detector. The LGA is advising people to fit more than one smoke detector in their home, with at least one fitted on the ceiling of every floor.

Missing or faulty batteries are the second biggest reason for a battery-operated smoke alarm failing to activate.

The LGA is also reminding people to check that their fuel-burning appliances – such as boilers, gas fires and cookers – are in good working order and properly serviced to avoid falling victim to carbon monoxide poisoning. The gas can build up in any fuel-burning appliances that are not properly maintained, or where chimneys or flues are blocked.

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, said: "Smoke alarms are proven life-savers, but these worrying failure rates should serve as a stark reminder to people to test their smoke alarms regularly and change batteries where necessary.

"People also need to be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide, which is a highly poisonous gas that has no colour, taste or smell and can build up in faulty boilers, gas fires and cookers."





## Green light for mergers

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid MP has said he is “minded to approve” proposals to replace nine Dorset councils with two new unitary authorities, and to merge two district councils in Suffolk.

The Dorset First proposals would see an ‘urban’ unitary replace small unitary councils in Poole and Bournemouth, plus Christchurch Borough Council. The remainder of Dorset County Council, plus East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, and West Dorset District Councils and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, would be replaced by a second unitary authority.

In a written parliamentary statement, Mr Javid said: “I am satisfied, on the basis of the information currently available to me, that this proposal, if implemented, is likely to improve local government across the area, establishing two new councils with a credible geography, and would command local support.”

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils’ plans to become a single, new district council also enjoy local support, would yield cost savings, and give stronger strategic and local leadership, he added.

In a joint statement, Leaders Cllr Rebecca Knox (Dorset), Cllr John Beesley (Bournemouth), Cllr Graham Carr-Jones (North Dorset), Cllr Janet Walton (Poole), Cllr Anthony Alford (West Dorset) and Cllr Jeff Cant (Weymouth & Portland), said: “Two councils will be more efficient, save money and protect public services. They can begin to secure a sustainable future for the public services that people value and need, including, and in particular, essential social care for our growing older population.”

The Leaders of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, Cllrs Ray Herring and Mark Bee, said: “We have a proud record of achieving success through innovative partnership working. We are glad that the Secretary of State has recognised that the creation of this new ‘super district’ is the next logical step for us to take, if we are to keep on reducing costs while protecting frontline services.”

Both the Dorset and Suffolk proposals are subject to further consultation up to 8 January, with a final decision expected soon after, but subject to parliamentary approval. The first elections to the new local authorities would take place in May 2019.

## Welfare reform objectives ‘could be undermined’

**A new report on the Government’s welfare reforms shows that the challenges facing affected households and councils risk undermining the objectives of the changes.**

The reform agenda is intended to reduce benefit dependency, while providing a safety net that protects the poorest.

‘The local impacts of welfare reform’, published by the Learning and Work Institute, and commissioned by the LGA, highlights how some households – many of whom are in work – are struggling to increase their income from employment or reduce their outgoings sufficiently to manage reductions in benefits income.

It identifies the freeze to the local housing allowance rate in the private rented sector and the dilution of work incentives in universal credit as key issues.

In addition, it highlights the problems caused by a chronic shortage of affordable accommodation in many parts of the country.

The report says the impacts of welfare reform vary, presenting different challenges for councils in different parts of the country.

In older industrial areas and seaside towns – where there are high levels of unemployment, poorer health outcomes and low wages – councils face particular challenges supporting those who are struggling to find and progress in work.

London boroughs, and councils in other areas where rents are exceptionally high, are dealing with increasing levels of homelessness and arrears, with high

numbers in temporary accommodation, which is expensive for councils and detrimental to households.

Analysis shows that seven million low-income households will see their incomes fall by, on average, £31 per week by 2020 in cash terms, as a consequence of the welfare changes. Councils, job centres and other local partners must do more, with support from government, to help them increase their income from employment or reduce the cost of housing.

Cllr Claire Kober, Chair of the LGA’s Resources Board, said: “While the reforms have led to some sustainable reductions in spending, and some modest improvements in employment outcomes, many are struggling to cope, and the resulting pressures on council budgets and services are presenting real challenges.

“The LGA has long argued for a more devolved and integrated approach to employment and skills, and for closer partnership working between job centres and councils.

“It is not right that councils are having to house many of those who have been unable to cope with the reductions in housing benefit in expensive, unsatisfactory temporary accommodation, because of the lack of affordable housing.”

**i** ‘The local impacts of welfare reform’, see [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications)

## LGA Annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference

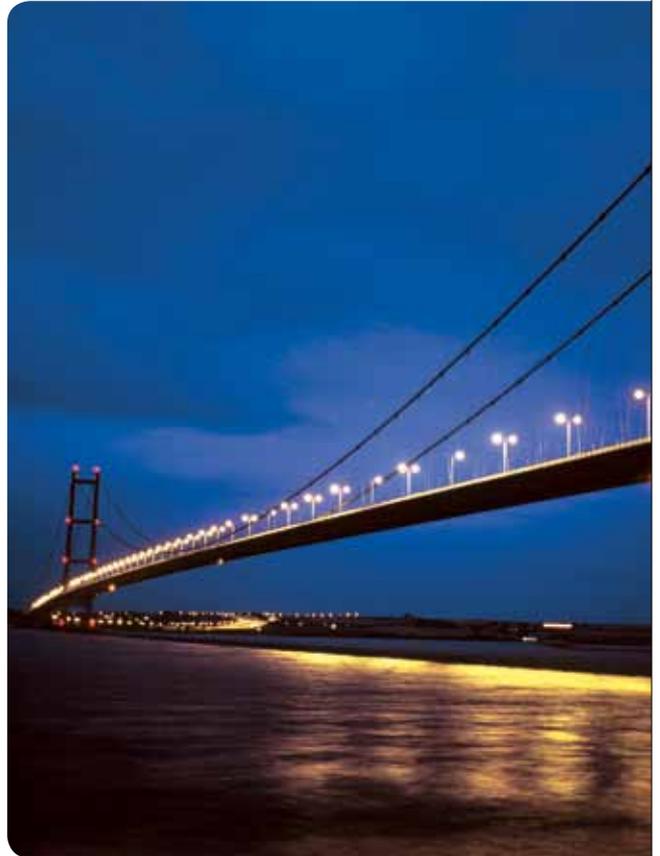
Wednesday 7 – Thursday 8 March 2018, Hull

No one can have missed the enormous success achieved by Hull as UK City of Culture 2017, and we are delighted to take this flagship conference there in March. Delegates will be able to see and hear first-hand about how Hull has used culture to involve nine out of 10 residents in community experiences, attract more than £3.3 billion in investment and achieve the country's fastest reduction in Jobseeker's Allowance claimants.

Newly confirmed speakers:

- **John Glen MP**, Minister for the Arts, Tourism and Heritage, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- **Ros Kerlake OBE**, Chief Executive, Heritage Lottery Fund
- **Rt Hon the Lord Howarth of Newport CBE**
- **Rosie Millard**, Deputy CEO, Creative Industries Federation

To book your place visit: [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)



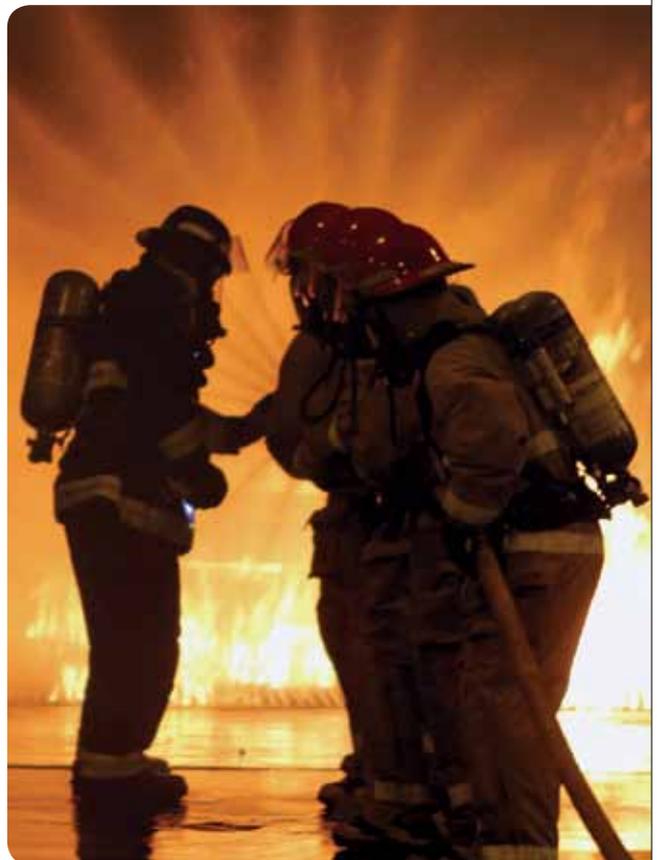
## LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

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](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)



# letters

## Partnership working on ASB

A multi-agency operation to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour and drinking in part of Grimsby's town centre has had initial success after the first few weeks of patrols.

Joint patrols by North East Lincolnshire Council and its partner ENGIE, Humberside Police, and Foundations drug and alcohol services were carried out in response to reports of drugs, alcohol and anti-social behaviour in the area. After only a few weeks of patrols, Foundations saw an increase in referrals for people to use their services.

Groups of people associated with cases of anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol use were given warnings, with 15 people receiving verbal warnings and four individuals being issued with community protection warning letters.

The council and our partners in Foundations and the police want to work with these individuals to help them to make positive changes to their lifestyles.

They don't need drugs or alcohol to survive, and the council's Wellbeing Service and Foundations offer people free support to help confront drug and alcohol-related problems.

Equally, addictions aren't something that can be fixed overnight. People can become dependent on drugs and alcohol for a number of reasons, and we don't want them to become embroiled in criminal processes.

**Cllr David Bolton (Lab)**, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Public Protection, North East Lincolnshire Council

## Trade links

Business and tourism representatives from Derbyshire County Council were recently in China to help showcase the county at the China International Industry Fair. A delegation led by the UK Government and the Midlands Engine – a major partnership to boost the national economy by focusing on the Midlands as the UK's manufacturing heartland – went to Shanghai to forge links with Chinese governors and business.

It's vital that Derbyshire, as a key player in the Midlands Engine, has a role in securing international trade post-Brexit. China's interest in the UK is clearly growing and we want Derbyshire to be at the forefront of their thinking when it comes to overseas travel and investment in business and industry.

International trade with Chinese businesses is initiated through government-to-government links, so the county council has a major role to play in building relationships with Chinese governors to show exactly what Derbyshire has to offer in terms of economic regeneration and tourism.

China moved into the top 10 of Britain's most valuable inbound visitor markets for the first time last year, when visits from Chinese tourists reached a record-breaking 270,000. Currently, spend by these visitors is worth £586 million to the UK economy. We're pleased that Visit Britain has set a target to increase the value of spend to £1 billion by 2020 and we want Derbyshire to tap into the market and encourage more visitors from China to travel to our great county.

**Cllr Barry Lewis (Con)**, Leader, Derbyshire County Council

## Period poverty

One in 10 girls is unable to afford sanitary products, according to a survey by Plan International UK.

To tackle the issue in Middlesbrough, we have begun a trial

## sound bites

**Mayor Andy Street** (Con, West Midlands)

"By the end of 2018, the first driverless vehicles will be being tested on our region's roads as part of our efforts to be a world leader in this new transport sector #Birmingham2030."

[www.twitter.com/andy4wm](http://www.twitter.com/andy4wm)

**Cllr David Finch** (Con, Essex)

"Great event at Pebmarsh this weekend with the opening of the Kings Head as a community owned pub."

[www.twitter.com/cllrdfinch](http://www.twitter.com/cllrdfinch)

**Cllr Tom Hayes** (Lab, Oxford)

"Great to have the former PM @OfficeGSBrown backing campaigning by the @CoopParty, @AnnelieseDodds, and myself to get better Government support to vulnerable victims of modern slavery."

[www.twitter.com/CllrTomHayes](http://www.twitter.com/CllrTomHayes)

**Cllr Ashley Mason** (Lib Dem, York)

"Great meeting today @CityofYork with the @YouthWorkUnit and MYPs discussing the Yorkshire and the Humber online platform I am creating to help young people engage in decision making! @byCLIVE @YorkYouth @UKYP @DominicBielby @JosephJTod #MakeYourMark"

[www.twitter.com/DandWLibDems](http://www.twitter.com/DandWLibDems)

**Cllr Neil Prior** (Ind, Pembrokeshire)

"Full flow #socialmedia workshop @Pembrokeshire. A great way to end the week #FridayFeeling."

[www.twitter.com/PriorNeil](http://www.twitter.com/PriorNeil)

**Cllr Sarah Dodds** (Lab, Lincolnshire)

"Amazing day visiting supported lodgings for Lincolnshire Care Leavers run by @barnardos Very impressive staff and care providers totally committed to some of Lincolnshire's most vulnerable young people. I am honoured and humbled in equal measure."

[www.twitter.com/CllrSarah](http://www.twitter.com/CllrSarah)

at Thorntree Community Hub, in my ward. With the support of Middlesbrough Council and staff at the hub, a basket has been placed in the female toilets which allows those requiring sanitary products to take them free of charge, and, for those who can, to donate them.

This is such an important issue. I have read about children not going to school because parents cannot afford sanitary products, and other distressing stories.

We can't sit back and do nothing while people in our communities are forced to make choices between sanitary products and other essentials such as food or warmth, which is what we are seeing.

It is hoped the sanitary product baskets can be rolled out into other community hubs and schools in Middlesbrough as the fight is taken to period poverty.

**Cllr Geraldine Purvis (Lab)**, Middlesbrough Council



**What do you think?** Please submit letters for publication by emailing [first@local.gov.uk](mailto:first@local.gov.uk). Letters may be edited and published online

# features

## Autumn Budget 2017

Some councils will have greater freedom to borrow to build new homes. But there was nothing for children and adult services in the Chancellor's first Autumn Budget

The LGA has led calls for councils to be given greater freedom to borrow to build new homes, and the Chancellor responded by pledging to lift the housing borrowing cap for some councils in his Autumn Budget.

Philip Hammond set out plans to allow councils to bid for increases in their caps from 2019/20, up to a total of £1 billion by the end of 2021/22.

This is an important recognition of the vital role that councils must play to solve our housing crisis, but the LGA continues to stress that all areas of the country need to be able to borrow to invest if they are to resume their role as major builders of affordable homes.

Other housing and planning measures in the Budget – such as more funding for bringing plots of land together for development (land assembly) and for small and medium-sized builders, allowing councils to charge more council tax for empty homes and a review to explore how to speed up the development of sites with planning permission – are positive steps.

But we have warned against further unnecessary changes to the planning system, which is already approving nine out of 10 applications.

The Budget also saw a devolution deal announced in the North of Tyne, transport projects in the North of England to receive new funding, and three Housing First pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands to support rough sleepers being given £28 million.

Other measures included a £2 million fund for place-based cultural development, an additional £45 million this year to tackle potholes and a further £160 million from the National Productivity Investment Fund to be invested in new 5G infrastructure.

But there were significant absences from the Chancellor's red box. It was hugely disappointing that the Budget offered nothing to ease the financial crisis facing local services and tackle the funding gaps facing both adult social care and children's services.

The LGA criticised the Government's approach of simply investing more money into the NHS while not addressing the funding crisis in adult social care. Continuing to treat the symptoms of the pressure on health services, rather than their causes, is short-sighted, costly and detrimental to people's wellbeing.

The Chancellor also made no announcements on the future replacement of EU regeneration funding, further business rates retention or the Fair Funding Review.

Given the uncertainty facing local government over business rates retention and the review, the upcoming provisional local government finance settlement needs to offer further funding to reduce the pace of reductions to revenue support grant funding to councils in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The Government needs to use the settlement to commit to reforms allowing local government as a whole to keep every penny of business rates collected to plug funding gaps.



### Business rates

- London will pilot 100 per cent business rates retention in 2018/19.
- Rate rises will switch from RPI to the CPI in April 2018.
- Revaluations will happen every three years following the next revaluation in 2022.

**LGA view:** *"It is good that councils will be fully compensated for the switch from RPI to CPI. More frequent valuations must be accompanied with measures to significantly reduce appeals backlogs."*



### Housing

- The housing revenue account borrowing cap will be lifted for councils in areas of high affordability pressure from 2019/20.
- Local authorities will be able to increase council tax on empty homes from 50 to 100 per cent.

**LGA view:** *"Lifting the cap for some councils is an important recognition of our argument about the vital role that councils must play to solve our housing crisis, but does not go far enough."*



### Universal Credit

- People claiming universal credit will have to wait five weeks, rather than six, to receive their first payment from February 2018.
- Housing benefit claimants will continue to receive it for an extra two weeks while waiting for their universal credit payments to start.

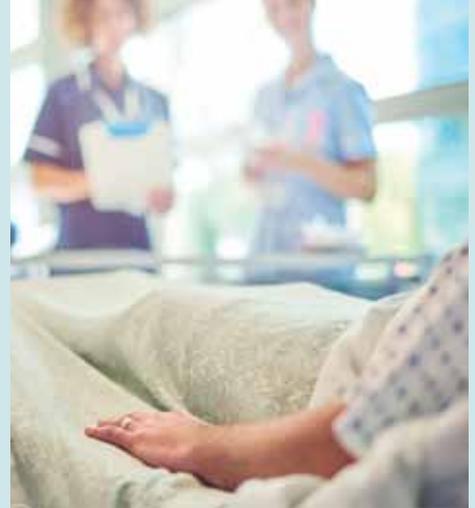
**LGA view:** *"The measures councils will be responsible for must be fully funded."*



### Environment

- A new £220 million Clean Air Fund will allow councils in England to introduce air quality improvements.
- The Government will explore how the tax system or charges could reduce the amount of single-use plastics waste.

**LGA view:** *"The Government can build on this positive step by backing a national diesel scrappage scheme."*



### Health and care

- The NHS will receive an additional £3.5 billion of capital investment and £2.8 billion of resource funding.

**LGA view:** *"The best way to reduce pressure on the NHS is to tackle the chronic underfunding of care and support services, to prevent people presenting at A&E in the first place."*



### Homelessness

- A Homelessness Reduction Taskforce will be launched.
- Schemes to support people at risk of homelessness in the private rented sector will receive £20 million.

**LGA view:** *"Councils must have the lead role in accessing funding so it is targeted at landlords to offer as many accommodation options as possible to families at risk of homelessness."*



### Transport

- Councils in cities will be able to bid for funding from the National Productivity Investment Fund to support transport schemes to drive productivity and reduce congestion.

**LGA view:** *"Congestion isn't just confined to cities, councils across the country need similar funding."*



### Devolution

- A North of Tyne devolution deal will secure £600 million and a new mayor.

**LGA view:** *"Many more deals are required to ensure communities across the country benefit from greater funding and powers to improve local services."*



**This is an edited version of the LGA's on-the-day briefing on the Autumn Statement.** For more details on what was in the Chancellor's red box for local government, please read the full statement at [www.local.gov.uk/autumn-budget-2017](http://www.local.gov.uk/autumn-budget-2017)



## #OurDay 2017

The LGA's latest annual tweetathon celebrating the people behind local public services goes worldwide



Last month, the local government sector came together on social media for a record-breaking online celebration of the people who keep our communities running.

The sixth annual #OurDay was the biggest yet, with more people, local authorities and other organisations than ever taking part.

The 24-hour social media marathon gives everyone who works or volunteers in local public services the chance to highlight how they improve the quality of life of residents.

Taking place primarily on Twitter, #OurDay 2017 broke all previous records: 14,000 contributors shared their working day via 45,000 tweets, reaching more than 31 million people.

From midnight to midnight on 21 November, councils, fire authorities, partner organisations, and, not least, thousands of council officers and councillors collectively documented a day in the life of UK local government, the hundreds of services provided by its one million employees and how people and places benefit. CCTV teams, road

repairs, bin collections,

full council meetings, library workshops, food safety inspections, rescue dogs, conservation efforts, wedding registrations, public health initiatives, various zoo animals, and many

more council functions were featured. At 7am, the #OurDay Thunderclap (supported by a record 667 individuals and organisations) reached 3.9 million people, making #OurDay the top trending Twitter topic in the UK – a position it held onto for the majority of the day.

As the hours went by and more people joined in, #OurDay started to trend first worldwide in the English language – a first for the campaign and a testament to the engaging and wide-reaching nature of local government services.

Cllr Paul Bettison OBE, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: "I would like to say a huge thank you to the thousands of people who joined in and shared their work.

Together, we highlighted a day in the life of local government, the variety of services we provide, and the difference it makes for our communities. "The reputation of local government has never been more important, as authorities are increasingly having to deliver more with less. #OurDay is an opportunity for everyone in the sector to reflect upon and take pride in the crucial work we carry out on a daily basis.

"Social media is the perfect platform to highlight the strong bond we have with our residents, as proven by the thousands of heartwarming stories and encouraging words shared throughout the day.

"#OurDay shows how life-changing the services we provide are and why local government remains the most trusted part of the public sector."



**i** Find out more at [www.local.gov.uk/our-day](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-day)

# Building up to



The LGA continues to press local government's concerns on all issues arising from the UK leaving the EU



Cllr Kevin Bentley is Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Task and Finish Group

The LGA's work to lead the debate about the potential impact of Brexit on local government – and to ensure the voice of councils and their communities is heard during negotiations – continues apace.

Through the LGA's Brexit Task and Finish Group, Leadership Board and Executive, we have identified a number of key areas that contain the greatest potential risks and opportunities, and are raising the profile of these with the Government, the Opposition front bench and in the media.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill has returned to Parliament and will convert the entire body of EU law into UK law. We are now working to ensure councils have a role in helping to establish a new legal base for the UK. While the Government has presented the transfer of laws as a matter of process rather than policy, we are concerned that complex areas of regulation – such as targets relating to clean air – will need the input of local government if they are to function correctly after we leave.

In the longer term, our focus has been on securing a formal role for councils in UK law-making. Through the EU's Committee of the Regions, UK local government currently has a formal advisory role in the EU law and policy-making process. Replicating this advisory role

post-Brexit – without additional bureaucracy – is fundamentally important and will lead to better, more effective legislation.

For example, it could support the creation of a more efficient UK system for regulating how councils buy goods and services after Brexit, boosting local growth and creating jobs. In addition, it could support the retention and strengthening of EU laws and regulations around food safety – vital to improving standards and reducing the risk of people eating unsafe food.

We are also pressing government to clarify whether EU funding programmes and access to the European Investment Bank will continue – and on what terms – during a transition period. We need a viable domestic successor to EU structural funding that gives local areas a greater say over how to target a new and simplified regional aid fund at projects of benefit to local people. It needs to be equivalent to the current £8.4 billion UK programme.

Brexit could also increase the need for a radical rethink of how we address the skills gap, as higher-skilled EU migrants have historically played an important role in the UK's economy. We have set out how devolving employment and skills services will get more people into work, increase their skills and save money. We have also highlighted the potential impact of changes to EU migration policy on key local

*“We need a viable domestic successor to EU structural funding, equivalent to the current £8.4 billion UK programme”*

government services, such as adult social care.

It looks set to be a busy few months. The Commons' Communities and Local Government Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the key risks and opportunities of Brexit for local government. It will also look into the scope for devolving powers from the EU to local authorities. I look forward to giving evidence to the Committee in early December.

We have also responded to two recently published White Paper consultations on legislating for the UK's customs, VAT and excise regimes, and future trade policy after we leave the EU.

We will be renewing our call for evidence about the impact of Brexit on local government, so that the risks and opportunities presented across the country can be recorded accurately.



Please visit our website ([www.local.gov.uk/topics/european-and-international/brexit](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/european-and-international/brexit)) to find out more about the LGA's ongoing work around Brexit and to read our comprehensive parliamentary briefings and White Paper submissions

# Local leadership of health



Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE is Chairman of the LGAs Community Wellbeing Board

## Health and wellbeing boards are anchors of place in a sea of ever-changing health initiatives

**H**ealth and wellbeing boards (HWBs) were set up to bring together local leaders from the NHS, public health and local government to plan how best to meet the health and care needs of residents, and address health inequalities.

The introduction of these bodies – under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 – was widely welcomed, and continues to enjoy cross-party support.

While there has been general agreement about their value in bringing together the major partners responsible for addressing health and wellbeing, the roles and responsibilities of national and local organisations have become more complex as a result of government reforms.

This means the need for HWBs, as a local mechanism for partnership and coordination, has never been greater.

The LGA commissions research annually into the effectiveness of these boards. The most important trend identified from this year's research is the decision by a significant number of boards to reassert a focus on the wider determinants of health, and on leading their local places.

The HWBs that have adopted this approach are developing a wider and longer-term perspective on place that offers a strategic framework in which to place short-term, focused activity on specific health challenges.

It helps them to balance immediate 'tick box and sign off' work with longer-term objectives. It also gives the board ownership of the overall direction of travel of the local health and care system, with boards acting as anchors of place in a sea of ever-changing health initiatives, such as sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs), accountable care systems and new models of care.

In many cases, this commitment to adopting a focus on place has led to a widening of the board's membership to include, for example, the police, fire and rescue services, universities, and housing providers.



*“HWBs are focusing on the wider determinants of health and on leading their local places”*

For those local authorities covering two-tier areas, this focus enables district councils to be clearer about their role. In addition, the links between the economy, employment, housing, growth and wellbeing are seen by many as a key element of a place-based approach.

Meanwhile, local health and care system

leaders no longer have to be convinced that integrating health and care is the right way forward. But our research suggests they all need to increase radically the scale and pace of integration, and move it from a marginal activity to the mainstream way in which services are commissioned and provided.

Effective integration is the single most important factor in ensuring that we have a system that is sustainable in the long term and able to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our citizens.

But it can be difficult. It takes time, energy, commitment and resources – and, during the hard times, sheer dogged determination – so it is also vital that we do it for the right reasons.

Integration is not an end in itself, nor

is it a panacea for the daunting financial challenges facing local government and the NHS.

First and foremost, the purpose of integration is to achieve the best possible health for our people, keeping them well, independent and able to contribute to the prosperity of their communities. We can only do this by shifting our model of care and support towards prevention, early intervention and reablement.

Elsewhere, the research identifies widespread concerns about the adequacy of the involvement of NHS England in health and wellbeing boards – and about the lack of any substantial local political input into STPs.

Despite these concerns, the most effective HWBs are developing their place-based leadership role to offer a compelling strategic context for STPs. They are making progress on the wider determinants of health, which are critically important to achieving a more sustainable health and care system in the long term. They are also working with neighbouring boards across the relevant STP footprint to exert greater influence on them.

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*“Integration is not an end in itself, nor is it a panacea for the daunting financial challenges facing local government and the NHS”*

The LGA has been forthright about the pace and manner in which STPs are being developed. There are some signs that NHS England has acknowledged our concerns and is committed to involving councils and councillors in their future development.

As Chairman of Warwickshire HWB for the past three years, one of the most valuable lessons I’ve learned is that we need time and a safe space in which to have difficult, open and honest discussions with our partners.

This doesn’t take the place of public meetings and transparency – we need both.

There has to be a ‘parity of esteem’ in partnerships – a recognition that we all bring different skills and experience to the table, and that we all have a valid contribution to make.

The NHS and local government have very different cultures, but what unites us all is that we want to do our best for our citizens – they have to be at the centre of our plans and our touchstone when there are tensions and impasses.



‘Stepping up to the place: integration self-assessment tool’, published by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the LGA, NHS Clinical Commissioners and NHS Confederation, is available to download free at [www.local.gov.uk/stepping-place-integration-self-assessment-tool](http://www.local.gov.uk/stepping-place-integration-self-assessment-tool)



## Annual public health conference and exhibition

### Narrowing the health inequalities gap

London, 1 March 2018

Public health teams and their partners are striving to help people live healthy lives for longer with less dependence on acute health and care services. Councils continue to tackle persistent problems such as mental illness, children’s health, alcohol and drug abuse, poverty and loneliness in old age. Join us at our most popular health conference to explore how serious health inequalities that still exist within our local communities are being addressed.

Confirmed speakers:

**Steve Brine MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care

**Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson**, ukactive

**Lord John Bird MBE**, The Big Issue

**Alison Garnham**, Child Poverty Action Group

To book your place visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)



# True grit

Councils are sharing resources to keep the country moving this winter

**W**ith 1.5 million tonnes of salt stockpiled, gritters out in force and an army of salt-equipped street cleaners ready to hit the streets, councils are geared up for freezing temperatures.

The LGA's annual Winter Readiness Survey reveals how councils have prepared for any big freeze or flooding this winter, with 92 per cent having either more salt in stock for this year, or the same level as they did last year.

With freezing temperatures forecast, highway teams are monitoring state-of-the-art weather forecasts with highly trained staff on standby around the clock and some already deployed to grit thousands of miles of roads whenever temperatures plummet.

To cope with ongoing funding pressures and limited resources, more than half of councils will share salt stocks, 28 per cent will share gritting machinery, and one in six plans to team up across their boundaries to dispatch staff to key locations.

The LGA survey of highway council bosses across England and Wales also finds:

- Almost eight in 10 councils will be looking to use GPS to manage gritting, to make sure the areas most affected by snow or ice are targeted.
- Street cleaners will be equipped with salt to spread on pavements by 62 per cent of councils. One in five will use measures other than salt to treat pavements, such as liquid de-icer.
- The vast majority of councils (84 per cent) will provide local communities with grit bins, to use as needed to tackle icy conditions.

A third of councils will designate flood wardens, to protect the most susceptible areas. Almost nine in 10 councils are planning activity to reduce the risk of flooding on local roads, with six in 10 planning to use GPS-guided 'gully suckers' to keep gullies as clear as possible.

Local authorities will be constantly updating websites and social media throughout the winter with information on



weather, road conditions, school closures and gritting routes.

Council leaders are also reminding households to show extra vigilance and ensure vulnerable friends, neighbours and relatives are safe if a big freeze bites.

Planning for winter remains a key

priority for councils, despite ongoing funding pressures and competing demands on their limited resources. Across the country, local authorities have taken the steps necessary to protect their residents from floods, ice and wintry conditions.

## Case studies

**Cornwall Council** grits 25 key routes, covering approximately 875 miles of the road network, ensuring that 85 per cent of traffic movements can continue through the winter. The routes include critical connections to hospital minor injury units, fire stations and all secondary schools. Cornwall has 16,000 tonnes of salt, from Irish salt mines, which is distributed to seven salt barns across the county for gritting operations.

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council** has bought nine new state-of-the-art gritting lorries to keep the main roads free from ice during the winter months. The trucks, provided by the council's main contractor, Balfour Beatty, are equipped with tracking equipment and give a more even distribution of rock salt. The council will keep residents updated on the latest weather arrangements on Twitter using the hashtag #WMMGrit.

For further information and guidance, please visit the LGA's severe weather hub, at [www.local.gov.uk/topics/severe-weather](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/severe-weather). The Met Office has tips, advice and a checklist to help communities and residents get 'winter weather ready' – read more at [www.metoffice.gov.uk/barometer/advice](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/barometer/advice)



# Energising procurement

The LGA has published new guidance for councils on how to save money on their energy bills



Cllr Ron Woodley is Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Councils spend around £773 million each year buying gas and electricity, and the cost of these fuels is rising.

To insulate councils from wider energy price trends, and to benefit from the huge opportunities presented by new energy technologies and business models, councils must look to gain greater control over this spend.

'Energising procurement', the LGA's recently published guidance on energy procurement strategy, sets out some of the most significant and efficient ways councils can reduce spending on gas and electricity.

It suggests councils should start by reducing demand for power, by investing in energy efficiency measures. Encouraging an energy awareness culture among staff; better monitoring and targeting of energy consumption; retrofitting buildings with better insulation, glazing, heating and boilers; and upgrading internal and street lighting to LED can all help.

Councils can also get better at procuring the energy they need, while some are participating more actively in the energy market itself, including as suppliers and generators. Councils can raise revenue and reduce costs by generating their own, clean energy – for example, from solar panels on council and other buildings, and from wind and waste.

Nottingham City Council has set up its own not-for-profit supply firm, Robin Hood Energy, which is now supplying electricity and gas to Islington Council's new company, Angelic Energy. It, in turn, is aiming to reduce fuel poverty in Islington by helping people save money on their energy bills.

'Energising procurement' also includes a guide for councillors on the right questions to ask officers, and the actions we can take to make a significant difference in this rapidly evolving sector.

While the need to make savings is a principal driver, a good energy procurement strategy is about much more than just financials. It can link to wider social, economic and environmental benefits – for example, by helping local businesses to reduce their energy costs, rewarding providers that offer apprenticeships and jobs for local people, and minimising the environmental impact of our energy consumption.

## Solar farm

In 2016, Swindon Borough Council launched the UK's first council solar bond to finance a community solar farm. It cost £4.8 million to build, with £3 million coming from the council and £1.8 million from small investors locally and across the country. The minimum investment was £5, with an effective rate of return of 6 per cent. Sixty-five per cent of the distributable profits will go towards funding local community initiatives, with the remainder to the council.

## Procurement help

RE:FIT helps public sector organisations to implement energy-efficiency and energy-generation measures across their premises and services. Providers guarantee the level of energy savings, verifying and monitoring this throughout the term of the contract.

The programme covers a wide range of improvements, including energy efficient street lighting, district heating, generation projects – such as ground-mounted solar panels – and energy storage. It offers expert advice and guidance, and can save time on procurement and retrofit works.

RE:FIT National is run by Local Partnerships, a joint venture between the Treasury and the LGA, see [www.localpartnerships.org.uk](http://www.localpartnerships.org.uk). RE:FIT London is run by the Greater London Authority, see [www.refit.org.uk](http://www.refit.org.uk)

## Sustainable purchasing

Durham County Council's 'Sustainable buying standard: electrical equipment (non-ICT)' commits the council procurement team to consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of products and services. The council recognises that by purchasing the most energy efficient, appropriate, and durable electrical appliances and equipment, substantial savings can be made in terms of both cost and environmental impact.



'Energising procurement: national energy procurement category strategy' is available free at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications) See also page 29

# Data protection



Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE is Vice-Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

## New regulations on protecting individuals' personal data take effect next year, and councils – and councillors – need to be prepared

**M**ore rigorous requirements relating to the protection and management of people's personal data come into effect on 25 May 2018.

Gone will be the presumption that organisations – including councils – are compliant with legislation unless proven otherwise.

Instead, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Bill, now before Parliament, will require organisations to demonstrate that privacy and security are embedded within their management and culture.

The new requirements represent the biggest change in data protection law in more than 20 years. They will affect almost every area of local government business and every type of data held by councils – from digital records to manual paperwork.

Organisations that fail to prepare for these changes could be fined up to €20 million (£17.8 million) or 4 per cent of revenue/turnover, depending on the nature and severity of any failure to protect sensitive data.

The support and oversight that you, as a councillor or elected mayor, offer to your local authority as it prepares for GDPR is essential.

For example, your council should have a GDPR implementation plan available for review, setting out the activities that must take place between now and May 2018. The responsible officers should be named, and strategies for reporting progress should be laid out.

A data protection officer (DPO) should be in post or planned for recruitment. Have you seen the job description? Are reporting lines in place so your DPO has access to your council's senior management board, and are you aware of the independence and statutory protection this role has?

Data processors and contractors in your supply chain need to be informed of their new legal obligations and liabilities. Has your council embedded privacy by design into its IT and business processes, to ensure that privacy



risk assessments are undertaken whenever new systems or changed data processing activities are introduced?

You also need to check if reporting procedures are robust enough to ensure incidents where personal data has been compromised can be notified to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) within 72 hours.

There are key documents your council should have started to assemble. The information asset register is a central breakdown of all the locations where personal data is held or processed, while the corporate record of processing activity (ROPA) sets out for each service where you are processing or sharing personal data, and will be audited on demand by the ICO.

Can you destroy data that is no longer needed, and enable particular data to be 'quarantined' from use, if requested, while complaints and enquiries are resolved?

There are also implications for you, as an individual elected member. You currently

have at least three hats on when processing personal information:

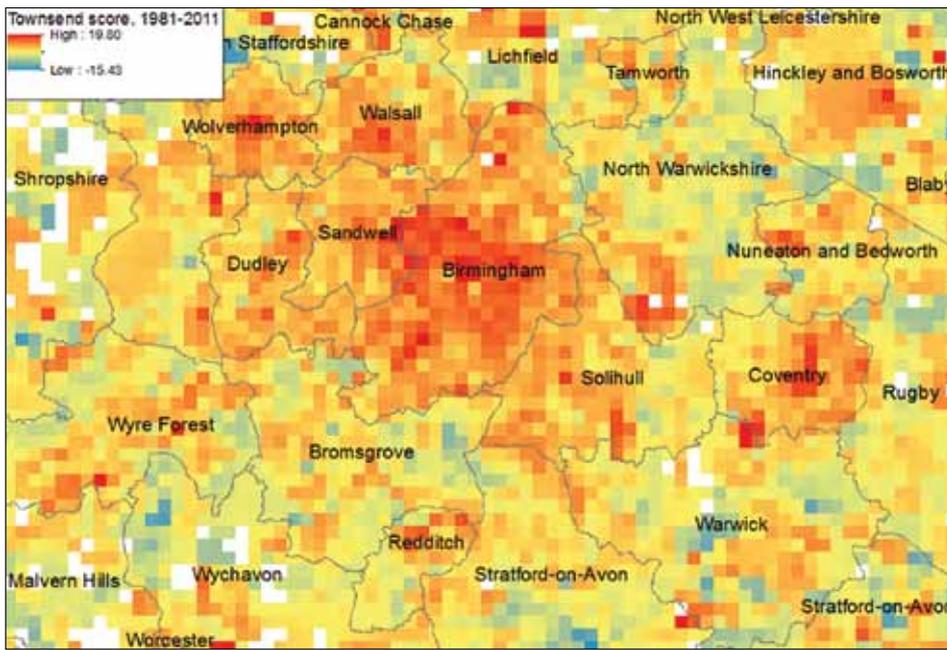
- as a member of the council, for council business for which your council is responsible
- in your capacity as a political activist, for which your political party is responsible
- in your own right as a councillor, in relation to enquiries raised with you by constituents in your ward, for which you are solely and directly responsible.

Currently, your council and your political party are each responsible for ensuring they have registered with the ICO in the Public Register of Data Controllers. At present, the official advice is that councillors must be individually registered for constituency casework; this will probably continue in some form after May 2018.

The LGA is encouraging local government to work together on the complex preparations that ought now to be well under way, and is offering a range of support and information for councils and councillors – see below.



**An active, knowledge-sharing GDPR group is available on the Knowledge Hub, at [www.khub.net](http://www.khub.net).** The LGA is organising three, free briefing events in Manchester, London and Birmingham in January and February – see [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events) for more information. We have also compiled a list of questions for councillors to ask about their council's preparations for the new GDPR requirements – see <http://e-sd.org/bgja7>. See also the ICO's website, [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)



A new, free data source could help councils track the impact of their employment, health and housing policies on local people

## Localising census data

For the first time, councils will be able to map local changes in a host of population variables from the Censuses of England and Wales, courtesy of a new, freely available dataset.

PopChange, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and developed by the University of Liverpool, covers the Censuses from 1971 to 2011.

Variables included so far include: the total population; age groups; ethnic group (from 1991); country of birth (just UK at present); employment; overcrowding; housing tenure (owner occupied and rented); vehicle access; the Townsend deprivation score; and self-reported health (from 1991).

PopChange provides Census data for one kilometre by one kilometre squares, providing a new level of insight into changing population levels which has not been available before.

Using this new resource, our analysis has found, for example, that the population centre for each Census has moved steadily further south, from Upper Midway in Derbyshire to Snarestone in Leicestershire, as the population of the country has shifted towards the South East.

This reflects a north-south divide in population growth, with more rapid growth in London and the South East of England than elsewhere.

However, we also discovered that



Chris Lloyd is Professor of Quantitative Geography at the University of Liverpool's Department of Geography and Planning

many heavily populated urban areas that had experienced very large population decreases during the 1970s – such as Newcastle, Birmingham and Liverpool – have largely recovered, particularly since 2001, and are now back at, or exceed, the levels they were at in 1971.

This urban growth links to opportunities, such as in employment, but also to challenges such as increasing overcrowding seen in outer London and other urban areas. Areas on the outskirts of London and the south east coast of England experienced a continuous increase in population over the same period.

The PopChange study also identifies the areas of highest population density across all five Censuses. These are all in London, with the most densely populated area being Tachbrook in Westminster, followed by Earls Court and Golbourne. Outside of London, the most densely populated area over this period was Spinney Hills in Leicester.

Councils can use PopChange to address key questions such as: which areas have seen the biggest population declines since 1981?

In which areas is deprivation most persistent and where has it increased in recent years? Are levels of poor health highest in areas with long histories of deprivation? Which areas have the most rapidly ageing populations? Which areas have the fastest growth in rented households?

For example, the diagram (above) of Birmingham and its surrounding local authorities shows an increase in deprivation across much of the city.

PopChange has the potential to provide vital benchmarks for councils tasked with allocating scarce resources and also in assessing how far policy interventions might have, or have had, an impact on changes in local areas.

Users can access the data via the web mapping tool at <https://popchange.liverpool.ac.uk/> and maps can be produced for the whole of Britain, or for individual local authority areas.

The PopChange team is keen to make the resource more useful to councils and we welcome your comments on what improvements we could make. Please do let us know if you are making use of the resource – this evidence will be vital in making the case for future funding to develop it further.



You can access PopChange at <https://popchange.liverpool.ac.uk/>

## LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2018

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM  
3-5 JULY 2018 #LGAconf18

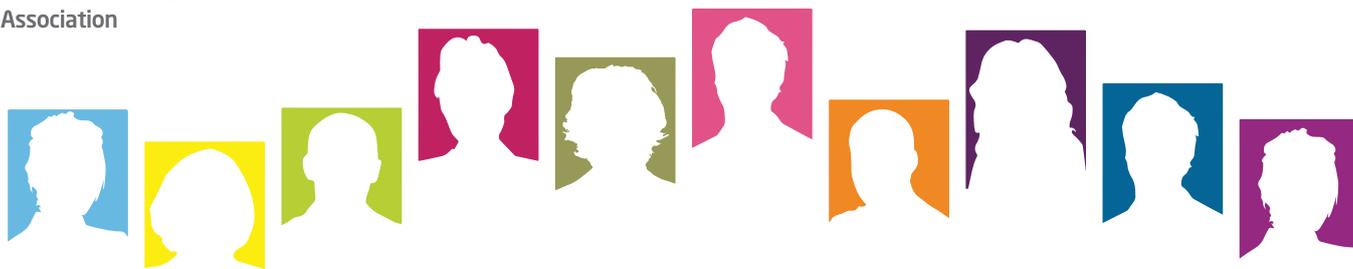
## Showcasing innovation through the Innovation Zone

The LGA's Annual Conference Innovation Zone is a vibrant, creative space for councils and other organisations to showcase and discuss how they are using innovation to address local issues.

To include the latest, most exciting examples from across the country we need your input. If you are interested in showcasing your work, please contact [innovation@local.gov.uk](mailto:innovation@local.gov.uk) by **26 January 2018**, with brief paragraphs on:

- your project
- how innovative and ground breaking it has been
- the difference it has made
- how it is addressing challenging and difficult issues
- its relevance to other councils.

To book your place visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference)



## Are your staff up to the **LG Challenge?**

### Who?

Now in its ninth year, the LGA is looking for 10 contestants for 2018's LG Challenge, in which the best and brightest local government officers compete in real-life challenges around the country.

### What?

Master problem solvers and passionate about delivering the best for the residents they serve, LG Challengers will come up with innovative solutions to the challenges faced by local government. With a £10,000 Bruce Lockheart scholarship for the winner, contestants have an opportunity to make a real and long lasting impact in their area.

### How?

The application deadline is **Monday 4 December**. To nominate your rising stars with the ambition and drive to take up the Challenge, visit [www.local.gov.uk/lgchallenge](http://www.local.gov.uk/lgchallenge)

# comment

## Devolving the commissioning of public services



Alexander Hitchcock is Senior Researcher at the think tank Reform

### Devolution is never far from the news.

In recent weeks, the West Midlands has spoken of a second devolution deal, the Prime Minister has backed the Northern Powerhouse, but Yorkshire is struggling to agree the terms of a deal.

Since the first mayor of London was elected in 2000, eight deals have been agreed across England. These have devolved infrastructure, transport and housing powers. This focus on growth is important for local economies, but risks overlooking public services. In Manchester, 'control' of the healthcare budget really means enforcing central government contracts and waiting time aims.

Public services reform and growth policies are two sides of the same coin, however, and the possibilities for improving public services through devolution are great.

Research carried out by Reform finds that more than £100 billion of public services are ripe to be devolved. In healthcare, this includes 95 per cent of the NHS's budget. GP contracts, secondary care and even 95 of 155 specialised health services could be commissioned by 38 local areas, based on local enterprise partnership (LEP) boundaries, across England. International best practice – most notably in Sweden, Finland and Spain – shows that local areas can join up care and design it for local problems. In the UK, people in the North are 40 per cent more likely to die from preventable causes than those in the South East.

It is not all about healthcare. Control of welfare-to-work programmes, including JobCentre Plus, and probation programmes can allow areas to tailor approaches to local needs. The East Midlands employs four times as many manufacturing professionals as London as a

proportion of the workforce; London has more than twice as many drug offences as Yorkshire and the Humber.

There is an appetite for devolution. LGA research finds that the public is more likely to trust local authorities than central government to make decisions about the areas in which they live. As one council chief executive interviewed by Reform argued: "All local authorities will tell you that they can handle NHS commissioning; the question is whether they can achieve economies of scale individually."

This question is part of a critical one that local areas need to answer to drive devolution: are you making the case for this, both through rhetoric – arguing vocally for it – and action – preparing governance structures for devolution?

The size of the devolved area is at the heart of the Yorkshire debate. It scuppered a Hampshire devolution deal, leaving a "bad taste" between councils, according to one interviewee for Reform's research. Councils need to overcome political differences to prepare the ground for devolution, for the benefit of residents.

Giving local authorities control of health spend would remove the need for clinical commissioning groups, health and wellbeing boards and even NHS England. This would free up £3.7 billion in administrative spending. Previous research has identified savings of £2.9 billion over five years by replacing district councils with unitary authorities.

Unitary authorities, as in Cornwall, or combined authorities, as in the West Midlands, would be best placed to integrate public services commissioning. Central government must provide the legal framework for this – amending key legislation such as the Health and Social Care Act and Cities and Local Government Devolution Act.

This would be a step change in devolution. But a greater emphasis on public services can deliver lasting improvements. This would keep devolution in the news for all the right reasons.



Reform's latest report, 'Vive la devolution: devolved public-services commissioning', is available at [www.reform.uk](http://www.reform.uk)

### Budget fails to mention councils

*“The Chancellor failed even to mention local government funding, despite a funding gap of £5.8 billion by 2019/20”*

This Budget was a slap in the face for local government, and the millions of vulnerable people who rely on us every day to deliver vital services.

Expectations were dashed when the Chancellor failed to announce any of the £1.3 billion desperately needed for adult social care now to prop up the care market, or the £2 billion needed to deal with the looming crisis in children's social care. In fact, the Chancellor failed even to mention local government funding at all, despite a total funding gap of £5.8 billion by 2019/20.

When the UK went to the polls in June, the country sent a clear message to the Prime

Minister that a solution to the growing social care crisis needed to be found. Despite this, her Government appears to be carrying on with no intention of funding social care properly.

Not only was there no reference to social care, but there was little joy for councils that are hoping to play their part in solving the housing crisis.

A month ago, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid called on the Treasury to release £50 billion in borrowing for councils to build – but the Chancellor instead offered just £1 billion spread over five years. On previous government figures, this will only deliver 2,500 new homes nationwide.



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

Hard-working local government staff, who are the unsung heroes serving our communities, will be left feeling let down by the Government after the Chancellor made no reference to funding to lift the public sector pay cap. Despite calls from members of the Cabinet to lift the cap, the seven-year freeze appears to be going nowhere.

Let's hope the Communities Secretary will be able to right some of these wrongs in the upcoming local government settlement. It rests on the shoulders of Sajid Javid to make the changes necessary to ensure local government can continue to deliver vital services across the country.

### chairman's comment

### Scrap the cap



Lord Porter  
is Chairman of the LGA

The Autumn Budget announcement raising the cap on borrowing for some councils so they can build more homes is a positive first step.

But what's good for some councils and all housing associations is good enough for all of us.

If we are to get back to building 300,000 homes a year, the Government needs to ensure all areas of the country can borrow to invest, so that local government can resume its role as a major builder of affordable homes.

While the Chancellor had some positive news for us on housing, it was what was missing from his Budget statement that

was more worrying. While the NHS will get an extra £2.8 billion over the next three years, there was nothing for adult social care.

Councils will be short of £2.3 billion for adult services by 2020. If they don't find an equal sum of money for adult social care, hospital beds will still get blocked by people who shouldn't be in there in the first place.

Children's services also came out with nothing, despite our warnings – and those of leading children's charities including Barnardo's and the National Children's Bureau – that unprecedented demand is resulting in 'crisis only' provision for vulnerable children. Investment in the family support services and early intervention work that prevents families getting into crisis in the first place is being

squeezed, with the sector facing a £2 billion shortfall by 2020.

Local government, we are told, is the most efficient part of the public sector, rigorously delivering balanced budgets and carving out efficiencies to protect valued and essential local services.

But we really are reaching the limit of what is possible, in the face of diminishing resources, uncertainty about future funding, and rising demand for services for children, adults and homeless people.

Something has to give. Let's hope it's not the vital local services our residents depend on, that we all so proudly tweeted about on #OurDay (p14). We are already pressing for better in the local government finance settlement.

*“If they don't find money for adult social care, hospital beds will still get blocked by people who shouldn't be there in the first place”*



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

## Council role in house building

*“It is essential that all councils are empowered to get on with building the homes their communities need”*

When I was elected as the LGA Conservative Group Leader, one of the key priorities I set out was to work with the Government to get more homes built and more people into home ownership.

I was pleased, therefore, to hear in the Autumn Budget that the Chancellor recognised the role councils can play in addressing the national housing shortage, and that the housing borrowing cap will be lifted for some councils.

It was also encouraging to see the announcement that local authorities will now have the power to increase the council tax premium on empty homes by up to 100 per cent.

If we are to return to a time when this country built more than 250,000 homes a year, however, it is essential all councils are empowered to get on with building the homes their communities need.

It is a busy time of year for local government. Next month, the Government will set out its plans for funding local services in the local government finance settlement.

Colleagues will know that adult social care and children's services are huge pressures on already stretched council budgets. As group leader, I will continue to call for the sustainable funding of this vital support for the most vulnerable people in our communities.



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

## A Budget full of holes

*“There is no council in the country that does not have people on housing waiting lists”*

After most Budgets, people warn you to look out for 'smoke and mirrors' trickery. But this Budget was more about massive gaping holes.

Take the high-profile issue of housing. With figures showing a massive downturn in affordable rented accommodation being built, this was a golden opportunity to act.

There will be some movement on the housing borrowing cap – but only in 'high demand' areas. There is no council in the country that does not have people on housing waiting lists and does not have homelessness. All areas should be regarded as 'high demand'!

Adult social care faces a deficit of £2.3 billion by the end of the decade, with children's services facing a £2 billion gap over the next two years. The Chancellor did not address this at all and has betrayed adults and children who depend on care services.

The Liberal Democrats' plan to raise £6 billion a year for our health and social care services through a penny on the pound in income tax is an idea that's time has come.

The Budget had some interesting points, such as the charge on single-use plastic items, and the ability to increase council tax on empty homes – but it was such a wasted opportunity, as key services will continue to be starved of cash and resources.



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

## No easing of financial pressures

*“We need the remaining business rates and a fairer distribution, not just pilots”*

We lobbied hard on proposals designed to help councils deliver for residents in England and Wales. The Chancellor's Budget announcement offered nothing to ease our financial pressures this time.

Rising demand to support children, the elderly and disabled are not recognised in the Budget, aside from a small disabled facilities grant.

We need the remaining business rates and a fairer distribution, not just pilots. We call for the forthcoming local government finance settlement to set out a plan of how we can run our services, now and in the future.

Little has been done to help us tackle homelessness. We must control our own Right to Buy discounts and keep the funding from sales to enable councils to replace sold housing. The pressure on planning for more houses has now shifted focus from the green belt and agricultural areas to the cities.

Universal credit needs further improvement – a week with no money at all and monthly payments continue.

There was a little support for business – important in our local economies – with small businesses thankfully kept out of VAT, for now. And it is pleasing to see an extra £1.2 billion for Wales.

However, if money is taken out of local spend, no wonder the economy and wage levels suffer – and productivity with them.



For more information about the LGA's political groups, see [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

# Choose your future



Cllr Alisa Flemming (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning at Croydon Council



**Croydon is home to London's largest youth population, with more than 94,000 young people aged 17 or under and 28,800 aged 18 to 24. Their energy, enthusiasm, drive and determination are our greatest assets, their wellbeing our biggest responsibility.**

Our Choose Your Future Campaign focuses on the issues that 200 young people told us were their priorities: finding jobs and success, and tackling crime.

With 102 victims of knife crime, aged under 25, since 2016, I share their safety concerns. We need to stop an increasing number of young people carrying knives for protection. But with 91 per cent of our young residents in training, education or employment, I know they want

success – and they deserve our support to achieve it.

Choose Your Future is special to me because we are putting young people's hopes and aspirations at the heart of a call to action for the entire community. We are encouraging them to make the right choices in those areas of their life, while calling on residents, businesses and local organisations to support them in this.

Everyone has a role to play, whether they are a young person thinking about what they want to achieve in life; a local business who could give them a step up; a retailer that can keep knives off the street by acting responsibly; or someone who could inspire young people. These are not issues the council, the police

or young people can tackle in isolation.

We have pledged to hold 1,000 conversations with Croydon's youth; to take 100 knives off the street; to see 100 young people given an opportunity; to get 10 organisations backing the campaign with live opportunities; and to create one community fund for young people. I am really looking forward to achieving all these things – and to continuing the conversation. It's time for us all to step up and make the right choices.



For more information about **Choose Your Future**, please visit <http://news.croydon.gov.uk/choose/>

## Making the case

**Working with the House of Lords, the LGA has improved legislation on every issue that has a local government angle.**

This has been possible because of the way people cooperate in local government in presenting their case to Parliament and because of the unique revising role that the House of Lords plays in our system of government.

As Shadow Minister for Local Government in the Lords, and a Vice-President of the LGA, I appreciate the evidence-based advice and guidance I receive on issues before Parliament, relating to local government, communities and people's lives. In other debates, expert opinion may not be the fashion but in local government it is essential to get things right.

Housing is very much an issue in the public eye at the moment. The signs of some changes in government policy and thinking



Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab) is Shadow Minister for Local Government

can be attributed to the case being made by local government – that housing of all tenures needs to be built, with local government making its full contribution to fixing our broken housing market.

*“In local government, expert opinion is essential to get things right”*

On planning – while we have not yet got full cost recovery on planning fees – the strong case made by the LGA, and supported in the House of Lords, has led to increases in fees and the possibility of a further rise to ease the burden.

On other issues – social care, council tax, business rates, education and the fire service – powerful cases continue to be made, working together to achieve the best possible outcome.

The LGA offers a unique resource, bringing together politicians of all parties and no party with professionals across the piste to present – to both Parliament and government – solutions to the social challenges we face, along with comment and evidence on proposals from Parliament and Whitehall.

It is a privilege to work closely with the LGA and councillors and together we have made a strong case that is listened to by Government.



# Delivering on transformation

## It's often said that success breeds success.

In local government, I think there's an element of truth in that – but only if you keep doing the things that put you on that path in the first place.

Six months on from the City of Wolverhampton Council winning the Local Authority of the Year and three other titles at the MJ Achievement Awards 2017, we're still firmly fixed on delivering our transformation. We still have a lot more to do.

It boils down to recognising that, as a local authority, you can influence all of the key areas that help to create successful places. From ensuring children have the best start in life and get the education and skills they need, to attracting the investment required to create jobs and prosperity, the council plays a key role.

The city of Wolverhampton (pictured) is a very different place from five years ago and, in another five years it will have been transformed even further.

The £3.7 billion currently being invested in a multitude of regeneration projects across the city has come about because the council took the initiative. We created a clear vision for the future with our partners and



Cllr Roger Lawrence (Lab)  
is Leader of City of  
Wolverhampton Council

have intervened and invested in key sites in order to kick-start private sector interest and shape future growth.

For example, by investing in a key office development – i10 – outside our new, city centre train, tram and bus interchange, we've created a market for grade-A office space. Further projects are now in the pipeline to attract higher quality jobs.

But if we're to create a genuinely successful place, the regeneration of the City of Wolverhampton must link with other agendas.

The council's latest LGA peer review made that very point – that we have to ensure residents benefit from the economic growth now being seen in the city. It's a challenge we take very seriously and one that's been at the heart of our strategy from the outset.

Two years ago, I set up a Skills and Employment Commission to come up with ways to tackle the fact that a fifth of working-age adults in the city have no qualifications. The issue is inextricably linked with the City of Wolverhampton's high levels of deprivation.

Since then, we've executed an action plan to tackle our skills deficit head on. It's resulted in the launch of Wolves@Work, a partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions that's doubled the size of our Work Coach programme and is helping 3,000 people to find employment.

We've also co-produced the Wolverhampton Workbox, which provides job seekers, employers, and training and education providers with a 'one stop, online hub' that links them together.

Our £40 million City Learning Quarter is bringing together adult education, a further education college and a library on one city centre site close to The Way – a £5.5 million Youth Zone opened in 2016 – as part of an education-led approach to regeneration.

The City of Wolverhampton's future now looks bright, but we have to sustain that focus. As local authorities, we occupy a unique position in our areas. It's down to us to offer the strong leadership, clear vision and strategy needed to link those different agendas together in a way that delivers and sustains success.

*“As a local authority, you can influence all of the key areas that help to create successful places”*

# 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.



In addition, we now offer **LG Inform Plus** to complement LG Inform. This subscription service gives users the power to drill down from authority wide information to much smaller areas.

The service offers more detailed performance and contextual data helping you to make the right decisions about the services you provide to your residents. It provides direct support, online tools and a data feed to use in your corporate systems and external apps.

[www.local.gov.uk/lginformplus](http://www.local.gov.uk/lginformplus)

# councillor



## Acting on climate change

**As community leaders, councillors play a significant role in realising the local benefits and opportunities of taking action on climate change.**

Working to cut carbon and increase resilience to extreme weather can save councils thousands of pounds on their energy bills. It can also help them avoid millions of pounds of costs that could be incurred if no adaptive actions are taken. The economic cost to the Leeds City Region alone from the December 2015 floods was estimated to be in excess of £0.5 billion.

There are also benefits for local people and places – lower energy bills, job opportunities, and the chance to avoid some of the expense of damage arising from bad weather.

The LGA's updated councillor workbook on acting on climate change sets out some of the key areas in which you and your council can make a difference – on the economy; housing and planning; environment and transport; health and social care; and finance. For example, supporting the growth of a low-carbon economy locally can help develop jobs, knowledge and infrastructure in specialist areas, such as solar power installation.

There are major opportunities for councils to support local growth and improve people's lives by making improvements to the housing

stock, setting the framework for development in local plans. For example, ensuring homes, businesses and public buildings use energy and water efficiently save councils and residents money.

Housing improvements also have health and wellbeing benefits. These include helping households save money on their energy bills and to keep warm by improving the energy efficiency of homes, and identifying those most at risk from the impacts of extreme weather, such as flooding, overheating and cold. Coordinating action to retrofit homes with energy-saving measures, such as better insulation, can help address fuel poverty, create jobs, cut carbon and make homes more resilient to the effects of severe weather.

Councils can also improve local health and wellbeing, and encourage inward investment, by promoting sustainable transport and a clean environment. Many measures can offer low-cost protection from extreme weather events, too.

Opportunities include building the resilience of your own estate through appropriate tree planting, water harvesting, and use of sustainable drainage and natural shading. Councils could also use the planning system to reduce people's need to travel, and promote cycling, walking and public transport.

Reducing energy use and avoiding damage from extreme weather makes financial sense for councils. In addition to energy-saving measures, there are opportunities for income generation, such as by investing in microgeneration and decentralised energy.

Good leadership in this area is about making things happen – for example, by supporting local energy projects, actively championing flood-defence measures, advocating for change, and looking after the interests of the vulnerable. Your role as a community leader provides for better empowerment of local communities.

Climate leadership also includes demonstrating good leadership within the council, communicating and engaging with your local community, and establishing partnerships for action.

The LGA's workbook draws together examples of good practice by councils. It considers ways in which you, as a councillor, can demonstrate climate leadership in your role as a ward councillor or portfolio holder, and has links to useful information and support.

**i** 'A councillor's workbook on acting on climate change' is free to download at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications). The LGA has been giving evidence to a parliamentary inquiry on improving air quality. For more information, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament)

# parliament

## Action promised on betting terminals

**The Government has pledged to cut by at least half the £100 maximum stake on fixed odds betting terminals, after significant campaigning by the LGA and councils to highlight their impact on local communities.**

Tracey Crouch MP, Minister for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said it would now consult on where the new limit should be set, from between £2 and £50. The LGA is lobbying for the lowest £2 limit. Consultations close on Tuesday 23 January.

The Government has taken this positive decision with the aim of tackling problem gambling and improving social responsibility across the gambling industry. Credible evidence shows that fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) may be particularly addictive and can harm vulnerable players, as well as being linked to anti-social behaviour and crime in betting shops.

In the debate that followed the Government's announcement, some MPs called for a commitment to reduce the maximum stake on a FOBT to £2. MPs also expressed frustration with the perceived lack of urgency on tackling the growing impact of FOBTs, given that the initial review of social responsibility and gambling was launched more than a year ago. In this time, millions of pounds have been lost by individuals playing on these particular gaming machines.

Tom Watson MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, speaking on behalf of the Opposition, said: "The Government's response, after a year-long process of delay after delay... is deeply disappointing... the Government has simply kicked the



process further into the long grass."

In response, Ms Crouch emphasised the requirement for government to follow a transparent consultation process before confirming any changes.

She noted: "We are following due process on this issue. It is really important that we do not rush measures through, because we have seen that hastily made legislation in this area can cause great impact and great harm, as with the Gambling Act 2005."

During the debate, many MPs also highlighted the role of councils in combating the prevalence of betting shops on high streets. In particular, the minister thanked Newham Council for its efforts in tackling FOBTs.

The Government's announcement was also debated in the House of Lords, where it was met with further calls for a commitment

to reduce the maximum stake from £100 to £2.

LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: "The stake is considerably too high, even if it is halved. It should not be possible for somebody to lose more than a week's wages in a matter of moments."

He added: "The money is lost to the local economy – it is being wasted – and we need to do something as quickly as possible to make sure that all the benefits of that money are spread across the whole community and not just into the bank accounts of a few businesses."

A range of parliamentary debates and questions on the issue are expected over the coming weeks.

The LGA will continue to work with parliamentarians and councils to make a compelling case for reform.



**The consultation on fixed-odds betting terminals** closes on Tuesday 23 January 2018. For more information or to respond, please visit [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures). For more on the LGA's parliamentary and lobbying work, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament)

# elections

## Safe seats and public indifference

By-election turnout was once seasonally related – higher in the spring and summer, lower in the winter. That relationship has weakened with the spread of postal voting.

However, the low turnout for recent elections, with only five registering more than 30 per cent, is the result of a combination of safe seats and public indifference.

Just over a fifth of electors participated in a fascinating contest between Leisa Smith, of Putting Hartlepool First, and Sue Little (Ind), making her fourth attempt to secure a council seat. Seaton ward has produced close finishes and this was no exception, with a margin of 49 votes settling matters in favour of the former.

There was less luck for another local party in Herefordshire's King's Acre ward. Here, It's Our County failed to defend the seat it won in 2015 with half the votes cast. The Conservatives did not field a candidate then and will be surprised to have won the by-election so convincingly, with the defending party reduced to third place.

Less welcome news awaited Conservative candidates elsewhere, with three losses to the Liberal Democrats. The previous result in Arun's Aldwick West revealed considerable split-ticket voting in May 2015. Although two Conservatives were elected then, the vote for the single UKIP candidate was considerable with both Liberal Democrats polling poorly. But the disintegration of UKIP's vote in some parts is producing large swings in by-elections now. This time, a 30-point drop for UKIP sits alongside an even larger boost for the victorious Liberal Democrats.

Elsewhere, local Conservatives are being ambushed by seasoned Liberal Democrat campaigners. Sefton's Duke's ward witnessed the return of John Pugh, the MP for Southport until he stood down at the last General



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Election. Although his party had already begun to make in-roads in a ward traditionally returning Conservatives, his presence injects fresh ambition that the parliamentary seat can be recovered.

North Devon's Braunton East ward shows experience winning out over youth. While the defending Conservatives selected 23-year-old Felix Milton to contest the ultra-marginal seat, the Liberal Democrats fielded Derrick Spear, who failed to be elected by just three votes two years before. Spear had been elected for the ward several times before, but perhaps local Conservatives should be congratulated for trying to reduce the average age of councillors!

Further evidence of UKIP's retreat from local politics emerges with defeat in Fareham. Chris Wood was elected to the borough council in 2014, having secured election to Hampshire County Council the previous year. In 2015, he contested the Gosport parliamentary constituency for UKIP, but the following year defected to the Conservatives.

The Conservatives selected Pal Hayre as their by-election candidate. She had secured the nomination over Wood for the 2017 Hampshire elections, and it may have been this in-house struggle among local Conservatives that

### local by-elections

#### Arun, Aldwick West

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
17.5% over Con Turnout 26.3%

#### Fareham, Stubbington

LIB DEM GAIN FROM UKIP  
19.4% over Con Turnout 38.7%

#### Hartlepool, Seaton

PHF GAIN FROM IND  
3.4% over Ind Turnout 21.4%

#### Herefordshire, King's Acre

CON GAIN FROM IOC  
17.8% over Ind Turnout 28.7%

#### North Devon, Braunton East

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
5.8% over Green Turnout 37.9%

#### Sefton, Dukes

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
29.6% over Con Turnout 28.5%

#### Waveney, St Margaret's

CON GAIN FROM LAB  
6.6% over Lab Turnout 18.4%

allowed the Liberal Democrats to capitalise.

Since its establishment on new boundaries in 2002, Waveney's St Margaret's ward has returned Labour councillors. Admittedly, some of the contests have produced close finishes – eight votes the winning margin in 2006, for example. In 2015, Labour secured all three seats, with Linda Coulam failing for a second time, about 2,000 votes adrift for the Conservatives. The by-election is third time lucky for her, therefore, with Labour's Nasima Begum losing out by just 77 votes in a low-turnout contest.



**Only by-election results for seats that changed hands are listed here**

(see panel above). For more information on these and other recent by-elections, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

## CALL FOR SESSION SUGGESTIONS

Do you have any interesting ideas for session content at conference? If so, we'd like to hear from you – all ideas considered.

Please submit your suggestions no later than **Friday 15 December** to [events@local.gov.uk](mailto:events@local.gov.uk)

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