

No.624 June 2018

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# first

the magazine for local government

## Interview:

"If all the care homes in your area are about to go under, **how would you prevent that?"**

Abdool Kara, Executive Leader,  
Local Services, National Audit Office

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**Local elections**  
All the results from  
the May polls



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**Metro mayors**  
Devolution one  
year on



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**Care in Wales**  
Invest equally in  
health and care

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# WE ARE NEWTON

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# NEWTON



## All change



It's been a busy time since the last edition of **first**.

There have been some important developments – on building regulations and funding for replacing combustible cladding, following the Grenfell

Tower fire (see p5); on fixed odds betting terminals (p6); and on planning and shale exploration (p8).

We also have a new Secretary of State (see p24) and, of course, I'm delighted to welcome many of you as newly elected councillors following the local elections in May. The LGA can offer you a lot of help and support as you settle into your new roles, and a good starting point is the LGA's Councillors Guide 2018/19 (p31).

This edition includes elections analysis from our resident poll pundits Professors Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher (p10), and there is advice on leadership from one of our longest-serving council leaders (p30).

We also have an introduction to a series of think pieces we are producing on adult social care, in the run-up to the Government's much anticipated Green Paper on the subject (p12). And the Welsh LGA reports on rising pressures on adult social care services in Wales (p23).

Finally, a year on from their election, we hear from the six established combined authority mayors about the benefits of devolution (p16).

**Lord Porter** is Chairman of the LGA

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*“The adult social care sector is slightly further advanced than the children's sector in terms of self-improvement and understanding good practice”*



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## 'Academies need oversight'



**The LGA has urged the Government to take control of academies in financial trouble or let councils step in and oversee them.**

This follows a series of reports that have raised concerns over the financial management of academies. According to the Kreston UK accountancy network, eight in 10 academies are in deficit, and academy trusts are failing because of poor financial governance.

The Public Accounts Committee has also said that academy trusts need to show the highest standards of governance, accountability and financial management, and that many trusts are falling short.

And in a recent report on academisation, the National Audit Office recommended that the Department for Education (DfE) should apply financial risk and due diligence tests to all academies and trustees.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "We urge the Government to get faltering academy finances under control, or allow councils to step in and oversee them, as they do with council-maintained schools that face financial challenges.

"The DfE cannot have effective oversight of spending in more than 7,000 academies. It says that academy finances are under stricter

control than council-maintained schools, and that they are in better financial health. But the figures, where they are available, show that many academies are running up deficits and there are serious questions about financial governance in many academies.

"What we need is greater transparency in how academies are managing their finances and urgent action taken to balance the books where necessary.

"Councils, which have vast experience running large budgets, are best placed to do this. This would ensure democratic accountability, and give parents the certainty and confidence of knowing that their child's school is able to deliver the best possible education and support, without risk of financial failure."

Separately, the Government has announced £50 million for grammar school expansion and new plans for expanding faith schools with funds being given to local authorities.

Cllr Watts said: "Government should not just focus exclusively on selective, faith schools and free schools. The most effective way to set up new schools and meet demand for places would be to give councils the powers and funding to open new council-maintained schools where there is a need."

## news in brief

### Free childcare

A report by the National Association of Head Teachers has found that early years providers are struggling to deliver the Government's 30-hours free childcare offer because of a lack of funding. Less than a fifth (19 per cent) of respondents said that the funding they received was sufficient to cover their costs. Cllr Roy Perry, Vice-Chairman of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils need to have both adequate funding and sufficient local flexibility to work with their providers to ensure that all families have access to high quality care that meets their needs."

### SEN support

A third of councils in England are planning to cut their budgets for deaf children, according to data obtained by the National Deaf Children's Society from Freedom of Information requests. Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils know that deafness can make life incredibly difficult for some children. They take their responsibilities to support not just deaf children, but all those with special educational needs or disabilities, through education extremely seriously. This is why we are calling for an urgent review of funding to meet the unprecedented rise in demand for support from children with special educational needs and disabilities."

### Tooth decay down

Tooth decay in five-year-olds continues to decline, with 23.3 per cent having decayed, missing or filled teeth in 2017, compared with 30.9 per cent in 2008, according to Public Health England. Children in deprived areas are more likely to have bad teeth. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Tooth decay is largely preventable, yet is the most common oral disease affecting children and young people. The findings of this survey highlight the need for urgent investment in oral health education so that parents and children understand the impact of sugar on teeth and the importance of good oral hygiene."

# Ministers to consult on combustible cladding

The Government has launched a consultation on banning flammable cladding and insulation on high-rise buildings.

Housing Secretary James Brokenshire announced the consultation after the government-commissioned building regulations review, carried out by Dame Judith Hackitt, did not recommend a ban.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: "The LGA has strongly made the case for banning the use of combustible materials on high-rise and complex buildings and for outlawing the use of desktop studies that attempt to approve safety compliance.

"It is great that the Secretary of State has listened to our concerns. He has rightly recognised the need to take action to tackle these two important issues, while the long-term reforms to fix our building regulation system, set out in Dame Judith Hackitt's report today, are put into place.



"We would urge the Government to introduce these bans as quickly as possible as they are the vital and immediate measures needed to make buildings safer today. This would provide the clarity for building owners who need to know what they can use to replace dangerous cladding and insulation and immediately help keep buildings safer."

Dame Judith's final 156-page review of the building regulation system concluded that roles and responsibilities for building safety are unclear, found that regulations and guidance is "ambiguous and inconsistent", and criticised the process for testing and certifying products.

Lord Porter added: "The Grenfell Tower fire exposed a system for ensuring buildings are safe that is broken. Since the tragedy, the LGA has led calls for a review of building regulations and made the case for systemic change."

He added it was good that Dame Judith's final report "set out a range of recommendations for its long-term reform" with councils ready to play a "leading role" in making sure a new system of building regulation works.

Recommendations include stronger sanctions and enforcement at design, construction and occupation phases, and the introduction of a new regulator – the Joint Competent Authority (JCA) – to bring together council building control functions, fire and rescue services and the Health and Safety Executive, to maximise the focus on building safety.

## Funding for cladding removal

The Government will fully fund the removal of dangerous cladding and insulation from tower blocks owned by councils and housing associations at an estimated cost of £400 million, Theresa May has said.

The Prime Minister made the pledge following work by the LGA to highlight the financial implications for councils of carrying out vital fire safety measures following the Grenfell Tower fire.

A total of 45 blocks owned by 15 councils were found to have cladding and insulation systems that failed one of the fire safety tests ordered by the Government following the fire last summer. Local authorities affected acted swiftly to implement precautionary measures where necessary and remove flammable materials.

LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: "While the priority for councils has been getting on with what they need to do to ensure people are safe in their homes following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the LGA has been involved in public and private conversations with the Government about the financial implications.

"It is great that the Government has honoured its commitment from last summer to meet the unexpected exceptional costs for councils arising from major remedial fire safety work on high-rise buildings."



## 'Plug funding gap with business rates'

MPs have backed the LGA's call for councils to be allowed to use the additional revenue gained from 75 per cent business rates retention to fund existing cost pressures.

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee urged the Government not to force councils to use the extra cash to replace revenue support grant, rural services delivery grant, GLA transport grant and public health grant.

Committee Chair Clive Betts MP said: "After years of financial constraints, the Government now has an opportunity to go some way towards protecting vital services for taxpayers by ensuring that any extra revenue from the retention of business rates can be kept by councils on top of current funding."

The committee also suggests that the Government must ensure any new responsibilities placed on councils from further business rates retention are linked to stimulating and promoting economic growth.

LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: "Local government in England is facing an overall funding gap that will exceed £5 billion by 2020. We are pleased that the committee is backing our call for councils to be able to use extra business rates income to plug this growing gap.

"The money local government has to maintain vital services is running out fast. Councils will see their core funding from central government further cut in half over the next two years and almost phased out completely by the end of the decade. Delays to when business rate reforms will be implemented mean councils are facing a financial cliff-edge in two years that the Government has to address.

"Introducing a fairer funding system and allowing local government to keep every penny of business rates collected to plug funding gaps is now the only way the Government can ensure local authorities are able to protect the services communities rely on into the next decade and beyond."

## news in brief

### Water safety

The LGA is supporting Drowning Prevention Week (15-25 June) and will be updating its drowning prevention toolkit, first launched last year. It is also encouraging councils to support the week and highlight the work that they are doing on drowning prevention by using the hashtags #STOPDROWNING #DPW.

The latest figures show that 255 people lost their lives in accidental drownings in the UK in 2017, with many more injured. Drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death among children.

Drowning Prevention Week this year is run by the Royal Life Saving Society UK, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Swim England. Further information and resources are available at [www.rlss.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/drowning-prevention-week/](http://www.rlss.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/drowning-prevention-week/). The current version of the LGA's toolkit can be accessed at [www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/water-safety-toolkit](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/water-safety-toolkit)

### Cyber security funding

The LGA has been awarded £1.5 million from the Cabinet Office to help improve and enhance councils' cyber security systems. Part of the funding will be used to carry out a stocktake of all English councils' existing security arrangements, to help establish and share good practice, and identify councils that could benefit from additional support. Cllr Paul Bettison, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: "Councils hold significant amounts of sensitive data which is why it is hugely important that we have the necessary protections in place." For more information, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/cyber-security](http://www.local.gov.uk/cyber-security)

### Dementia admissions

There were more than 50,000 avoidable emergency hospital admissions for people aged over 65 with dementia last year – a 70 per cent increase over the past five years – because of a lack of adequate social care, according to a report by the Alzheimer's Society. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "To help reduce pressures on the NHS, social care needs to be given parity with the health service and councils need urgent funding to invest in effective prevention work to reduce the need for people to be admitted to hospital in the first place."



### A credible plan to sustain the underfunded care sector is needed this year, according to a Public Accounts Committee report on the adult social care workforce in England.

The report says the care workforce is suffering from low pay, low esteem and high turnover of staff, and that there is an urgent need to reverse the poor public image of care work to boost recruitment and retention across the sector.

MPs on the influential committee also express concern that the trend towards only supporting people with the most critical needs is contributing to growing levels of unmet need for people with moderate care needs – which may become critical if support is not given.

Meanwhile, an interim report from the Lord Darzi Review of Health and Care estimates that adult social care will require at least an extra £10 billion by 2030, just to maintain existing service provision.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "These reports lay bare the stark facts behind the adult social care crisis.

"Councils have done all they can to prioritise and protect adult social care,

but the combination of historic funding reductions, rising demand and increasing cost pressures means many councils are having to make significant savings and reductions across their budgets, including within adult social care itself.

"This is leading to an ever more fragile provider market, growing unmet and undermet need, further strain on informal carers, less investment in prevention, and continued pressure on an already-overstretched workforce.

"The funding gap facing adult social care is set to exceed £2 billion by 2020... The majority of this pressure is with us now with an estimated £1.3 billion of the £2 billion needed to stabilise the care market."

She added: "The Darzi forecast that adult social care will need an extra £10 billion by 2030 just to maintain existing service provision – a more dire position than that facing the NHS – must serve as a wake-up call for concerted action to address the serious financial challenges adult social care is experiencing now and will continue to face in years to come without a sustainable funding solution. This action requires consensus and support from across the political divide."

### Betting terminal stakes reduced

The Government has announced that the maximum stakes on fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) will be reduced from £100 to £2, following extensive lobbying by the LGA and others.

The LGA is now calling for the introduction of the new £2 limit as soon as possible.

"This announcement is fantastic news and a sensible decision to help tackle the harm these machines can cause," said Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

"The LGA and others have campaigned for a number of years for a reduction in maximum stakes on FOBTs, which are significantly out of line with other high street gambling machines. We are delighted that the Government has responded to our calls.

"Bringing the stake down to £2 will help to reduce problem gambling and its devastating impacts on individuals and communities. It will help prevent vulnerable players from losing £100 in seconds in a single play, which many people cannot afford to lose.

"The harm and anti-social behaviour these machines can cause has become an issue of growing national concern, while research has shown that problem gambling, often linked to FOBTs, creates huge costs for the NHS, councils and the criminal justice system."

# Children's mental health plans 'lack ambition'

**MPs are warning that the Government's Green Paper on children's mental health will leave hundreds of thousands without proper care.**

The paper lacks ambition and will give no help to those children who desperately need it now, say the Education and Health and Social Care Committees in a joint report.

The Government is rolling out new 'trailblazer' pilot projects where mental health teams provide extra support, alongside waiting time targets.

However, these schemes are set to roll out in only a fifth to a quarter of the country by 2022/23.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "If we are to tackle the crisis in children's mental health, we need a root-and-branch overhaul of existing services. We need to develop a system that says yes, rather than no, to children when they ask for help.

"As a starting point, we want to see

councils and schools given the funding to offer independent mental health counselling so pupils have access to support as and when they need it."

Independent school-based counselling is a key 'ask' of the LGA's Bright Futures campaign (see also below). The LGA has estimated that rolling out a service to every secondary-age school would cost just 5.3 per cent of all the new money pledged for children's mental health since 2015.

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, said: "The Green Paper is just not ambitious enough and will leave so many children without the care they need. It needs to go much further in considering how to prevent mental health difficulties in the first place.

"We want to see more evidence that government will join up services in a way that places children and young people at their heart and that improves services to all children, rather than a minority."

## Bright Futures in the House



Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi MP launched an LGA exhibition of its Bright Futures campaign for children in Parliament last month (see [www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures](http://www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures)).

The exhibition highlighted the importance of early intervention and prevention in children's social care and children and adolescent mental health services, and featured case studies from councils across the country. Mr Zahawi (pictured, right) spoke to guests about the work the Government is doing to support councils to deliver children's services.

Other speakers included LGA Vice-President and exhibition sponsor, Wera Hobhouse MP (second right), mental health campaigner Hope Virgo (third right) and LGA Chairman Lord Porter (second left), pictured with Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board (left), and Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board (third left).

The week-long exhibition was visited by a number of MPs and Peers, including Communities Secretary James Brokenshire, who congratulated the LGA and councils for highlighting this important work. To see more photos and comments from the exhibition, search '#gettingthebest' on Twitter.

## news in brief

### Housing help

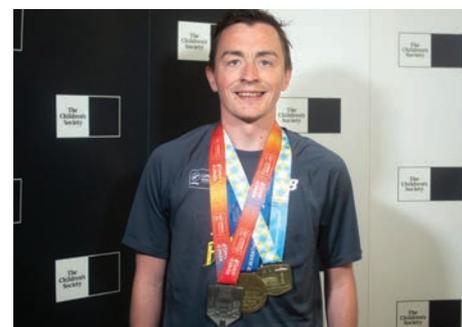
Councils can bid now for help from an independent housing expert to help them deliver and plan for more homes, and reduce homelessness. Last year, more than 40 projects across the country were supported by the LGA's Housing Advisers Programme, helping councils deliver local housing priorities. The deadline for expressions of interest is 26 June, see [www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/housing-advisers-programme-201819](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/housing-advisers-programme-201819) or email [housingadvisers@local.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvisers@local.gov.uk)

### Brexit boards

The LGA is helping facilitate regional and local sounding boards to raise and discuss key risks and opportunities for local areas arising from Brexit. This information strengthens local government's voice with local evidence during negotiations with central government, as well as informing government policy development. So far, we have held sessions in Newcastle, Cornwall, West Lancashire, Bristol, Staffordshire and Tees Valley, as well as in the London, South East and East regions, and with the East of England LGA. If your council is interested in putting on a local Brexit sounding board, please email [jessica.norman@local.gov.uk](mailto:jessica.norman@local.gov.uk)

### Marathon effort

LGA Deputy Chairman Cllr Sean Anstee completed three marathons in a month, culminating with the London Marathon in late April, to raise money for the Children's Society. The charity's Joe Jenkins said: "Sean's outstanding efforts will help make a real difference to young people's lives." LGA Chairman Lord Porter tweeted: "He is one of the best politicians in local government and has a heart three times the size of his body, a wisdom three times the length of his age, and has taken a £10 note out of my wallet three times as a result of this race!"





## 'Keep fracking decisions local'

The LGA has warned against extending permitted development rights to fracking operations.

In proposals set out by government, shale exploration developments would not need planning permission.

Councils argue that communities living near to fracking sites should be allowed to have their say on whether to host shale projects in their area.

In a written Commons statement, Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, announced a consultation on the proposals over the summer, and launched a new £1.6 million shale support fund to build capacity and capability in local authorities dealing with shale applications.

He also said that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government will "actively consider" calling in shale applications, particularly where statutory deadlines have been exceeded – and may consider determining new applications to "underperforming" local planning authorities himself.

Cllr Judith Blake, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: "It is good that the Government will provide additional funding and support to help councils deal with shale applications. However, we oppose any proposal for shale exploration to be allowed to bypass the locally democratic planning system through permitted development or national planning inspectors.

"We are clear that it should be up to local communities to decide whether or not to host fracking operations in their areas.

"People living near fracking sites – who are most affected by them – have a right to be heard. Local planning procedure exists for a reason, to ensure a thorough and detailed consultation with those communities."

She added: "Planners also protect local environments and ensure appropriate and affordable homes are delivered for our communities. That's why, ultimately, council planners should be able to set fees that reflect the needs of their local area."

# Fly-tipping waste 'stretches from London to Moscow'

The amount of waste being fly-tipped across England each year could stretch from London to Moscow, analysis by the LGA has revealed.

It is warning that the cost to taxpayers of clearing up fly-tipping rose to £57 million over the last year – a rise of 13 per cent.

Council leaders want the Government to help councils tackle this scourge by introducing a scaled-up and speedier approach to punishing fly-tipping, including streamlining the courts and prosecution process for offenders.

LGA analysis shows in 2016/17, there were 492,139 incidents of fly-tipping reported to be the size of a van or truck. If these vehicles were parked one behind the other, then the amount of waste would be able to circle the M25 twelve and a half times.

The Government has allowed councils to apply fixed penalty notices to fly-tippers. However, when taking offenders to court, they have to cover the full cost of successful prosecutions, with fines resulting from these convictions being paid directly to the court rather than the councils who have to clean up the mess.

Recovering costs through these fines is costly and can take years, which often means councils end up making a net loss on every successful prosecution.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, said: "It's an absolute disgrace for anyone to think that they can use the environments in which our residents live as a repository for litter.

"Councils are determined to protect local

environments. New fixed penalty notice powers from the Government will help but every single conviction for more serious fly-tipping offences still results in council taxpayers having to pick up the bill.

"We need to make sure that when councils take offenders to court, a faster, more effective legal system ensures that serious fly-tipping offences result in hard-hitting fines."

He added: "Manufacturers can also contribute, by providing more take-back services so people can hand in old furniture and mattresses when they buy new ones. Councils are determined to end the scourge of fly-tipping and always urge residents to report it as soon as possible."



## Clean air strategy launched

The Government has launched a new clean air strategy to help cut air pollution and save lives.

The strategy will include primary legislation to create a new legal air quality framework and give local government new powers to take decisive action.

Ministers believe the strategy will cut the costs of air pollution to society by an estimated £1 billion every year by 2020, rising to £2.5 billion every year from 2030.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, said: "Councils recognise the impact that harmful emissions have on our communities and are determined to tackle it in all its forms. If the Government's air quality plans are to be successful, they not only need to be underpinned by local flexibility and sufficient funding but also accompanied by robust national action.

"It is also important that councils have the powers to further tackle air pollution, particularly with regard to clean air zones as well as expanded road and traffic measures. If we're truly to tackle air pollution, we need government support to enable us to deliver effective local plans, and robust national action to help the country transition to low-emission vehicles and power generation."

# Letters

## Love your local market

Markets across County Durham showcased all they have to offer as part of the national Love Your Local Market campaign last month, celebrating the benefits they bring to communities.

Events included a gathering of some of the finest street food chefs from across the North East in Durham, a retail market, a 'Craft in Durham' market and fairground rides, with some traders offering incentives to customers.

Durham County Council oversees the management and operation of nine markets across the county and offers a range of support to help traders and encourage new visitors (pictured are Matthew Mchone and customers).

Markets are at the heart of many of our communities and provide a real boost to our local economy, so this fortnight of celebration was a great way for people to learn more about them and find out what they have to offer.

**Cllr Carl Marshall (Lab)**, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Durham County Council



## Sunderland hosts Leonardo da Vinci

To mark the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens has been selected to be one of 12 UK venues to host simultaneous exhibitions of drawings by this extraordinary artist.

'Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing' will give the widest-ever UK audience the opportunity to see 12 drawings, selected to reflect the full range of Leonardo's interests: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, anatomy, engineering, cartography, geology and botany.

This partnership with the Royal Collection Trust and the opportunity to host this iconic exhibition demonstrates our city's deserved reputation as an emerging cultural hub.

The attraction of art should not be underestimated. Events such as these make a huge contribution to the city, its reputation and its economy. In 2015, more than 92,000 people visited Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, while the Canaletto masterpiece, 'A Regatta on the Grand Canal', was on loan from the National Gallery in London.

These visitors also spend time and money here, giving increased opportunities to local businesses and accommodation providers. I urge everyone to make time to go along and visit what, I'm sure, will be a fantastic event.

**Cllr John Kelly (Lab)**, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Culture, Sunderland City Council

## sound bites

**Cllr Carolyn Webster** (Con, Bridgend)

"Great chat with @GavinWilliamson about HM #ArmedForces and #Veterans, both a personal and political interest of mine."

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

**Cllr Andrew Kelly** (Con, Elmbridge)

"A lovely & memorable wedding service – congratulations to the Duke & Duchess of Sussex! A perfect day – a happy couple, Windsor looking beautiful in the sun and the crowds waving the flags & cheering."

#RoyalWedding."

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

**Cllr Jane Dowson** (Lab, Leeds)

"Attended a great men's mental health event this morning at Leeds Museum. Well done to Lisa and the team for organising it."

@LordMayorLeeds @MindWellLeeds, @LeedsMind @LeedsMuseums."

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

**Cllr Shaffaq Mohammed** (Lib Dem, Sheffield)

"Great to welcome the 122nd Lord Mayor of Sheffield Cllr Magid, Cllr Magid made a very moving speech about his journey from war-torn Somalia to the City of Sheffield."

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

**Cllr Paul Hopfensperger** (Ind, St Edmundsbury)

"Delighted to have won the 'Apple & Spoon' race (they hadn't got any eggs) at the @stmaryspeter Parish Festival today! Wonderful day."

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

## A slow news day?



Cllr Sarah Osborne (Lib Dem, Lewes and East Sussex) found her cat Alfie had left an unexpected 'gift' on her copy of **first** – a live slow worm. All three survived the experience. Email [karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk) with your quirky photos or stories of life as a councillor.



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

# features

## Balance of power

May's elections left the balance of power in local government largely unchanged overall, despite decisive swings in some councils

Last month's local elections did little either to shift the terms of the national political debate or to alter the balance of power in local government.

In most cases where there has been a shift to or from 'no overall control', for example, it will likely be the same party and people who continue to have the whip hand.

But electors in those five councils that did witness a decisive change will now have a whole new team – and probably new policy promises as well – to hold accountable. In Plymouth, Labour claims it will fulfil 100 pledges, although not all are solely within its gift; in Redditch, the victorious Conservatives have targeted town centre regeneration.

The Liberal Democrats forced turnovers from the Conservatives in Kingston upon Thames, Richmond upon Thames, and South Cambridgeshire. In the latter they promise a return to 'liberal politics' and it is notable that the Remain side was well ahead in each of those three local authorities at the 2016 EU referendum.

In general, however, and despite the undoubted impact of local issues and personalities on individual results, analysis of the elections can conveniently be divided between London and elsewhere.

Labour did do well in London. Although falling 100 seats short of their record total of 1,221 in 1971, they matched their highest ever number of councils controlled (21). In Redbridge, they made 15 gains and now have at least 80 per cent of all seats in no fewer than 14 of the 32 London boroughs. On the other hand, the party comprehensively lost the battle to



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



manage expectations to the Conservatives.

The Conservatives registered their lowest ever number of seats in the capital (511) and lost control in both Kingston and Richmond. But they had so successfully played up the likelihood of their losing councils such as Barnet and Westminster, which had been in their hands ever since their creation in 1964, that Theresa May was able to claim holding onto them as some kind of victory. Labour, by contrast, was perceived to have fallen short of its ambitions.

*“Both Labour and the Conservatives made ground in former UKIP territory”*

There could be no disguising the Conservatives' failure in south west London, though. Although they made in-roads into the Liberal Democrat majority in Sutton, they suffered landslide defeats to Vince Cable's party in his own backyard. Indeed, more than half the Tory net losses in London were to the Liberal Democrats rather than Labour.

If that has been put down in some quarters to the revenge of 'Remain' voters, it was the wipe-out of UKIP in the

rest of England that had a clear impact on outcomes.

Following the loss of Trafford, the Conservatives now have a single metropolitan borough (Solihull), but did come close to snatching control in both Dudley and Walsall on the back of UKIP losses. They advanced, too, in Amber Valley (on paper Labour's easiest chance of a council gain) and in other parts of the Midlands with key marginal parliamentary seats, such as Derby, and Nuneaton and Bedworth.

In other places, though, the fallout was more evenly spread and it is too crude to put the results down simply to a Brexit-driven electoral rift. In Basildon (a Conservative gain), Great Yarmouth, North East Lincolnshire, and Thurrock, both Labour and the Conservatives made ground in former UKIP territory.

In Plymouth – the only case of Labour winning control directly from the Conservatives – its gains were thanks in part to regaining wards it had lost to UKIP in 2014, but where the elected councillors had subsequently defected to the Conservatives. Labour somehow needs to bottle the Plymouth formula if it is to perform strongly at next year's all-out unitary and district elections and challenge the Conservatives for plurality on the LGA's boards and committees.

The Liberal Democrats effectively held on to what they had barring their





*“It’s Independents and micro-parties who are the fourth force in English local politics”*

three spectacular council gains – South Cambridgeshire alone accounting for nearly two-thirds of their entire net seat gains (20 out of 34) in shire England. They still have fewer than 10 per cent of all the councillors in England and have a long way to go before the three-party politics that characterised local government in much of the 1990s and 2000s returns. Just a decade ago, they had more than 4,000 councillors and majority control in 30 principal councils.

The Greens now claim to be the fourth party in English local politics and, in the sense of having overtaken UKIP in both vote share and the total number of councillors (174 to 137), that’s true. Nonetheless, there remains evidence that they have been outflanked on the left by Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour in some places. They lost half their previous 10 seats on Norwich City Council to make them a rather less effective opposition, and were squeezed down to just two councillors in Oxford.

However, it’s really Independents and micro-parties who are the fourth force. There remain more than 1,000 such councillors and they are often best placed to exploit local loyalties or discontents. In Bolton, for example, the Farnworth and Kearsley First group added to their March by-election success with two more gains from Labour; in Tandridge, Surrey, it was opposition to the Local Plan that saw ‘non-party’ candidates lead what

**Results summary 2018 England and Wales (compared with May 2017, including councils without full elections, local by-elections and boundary changes)**

	Seats	Councils
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>-43</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>+82</b>	<b>-1</b>
<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>+73</b>	<b>+3</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>-112</b>	
<b>No overall control</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-3</b>

**Councils controlled (England) 2018**

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Ind/Other	No overall control
<b>198</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>43</b>

**Councils controlled (Wales) 2018**

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Ind/Other	Nat	No overall control
<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>

**Councillors (England) 2018**

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Ind/Other
<b>8,644</b>	<b>5,751</b>	<b>1,746</b>	<b>1,488</b>

**Councillors (Wales) 2018**

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Nat	Ind/Other
<b>183</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>201</b>

**COUNCIL CONTROL CHANGE (3 May 2018)**

**Con gain from Lab:** Redditch

**Con gain from NOC:** Barnet; Basildon; Peterborough

**Lab gain from Con:** Plymouth

**Lab gain from NOC:** Kirklees; Tower Hamlets

**Lib Dem gain from Con:** Kingston upon Thames; Richmond upon Thames; South Cambridgeshire.

**Lib Dem gain from NOC:** Three Rivers

**Con lose to NOC:** Mole Valley; Trafford

**Lab lose to NOC:** Derby; Nuneaton and Bedworth

one councillor called a ‘bloodbath’ of eight Conservative losses.

The six mayoral direct elections received almost no national attention. Labour easily won the contests in Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, and Tower Hamlets – the latter firmly putting to bed the Independent challenge which had so damaged the party in both 2010 and 2014. Perhaps the most interesting aspect is that Rokhsana Fiaz, who won almost three-quarters of the first preference vote in Newham, has pledged

to hold a referendum on whether her post should be abolished.

Labour MP Dan Jarvis comfortably prevailed in the inaugural Sheffield City Region election and he too has talked about his role becoming redundant – though in this case following the negotiation of a wider Yorkshire devolution deal.

In Watford, Peter Taylor retained the mayoralty for the Liberal Democrats, polling just as strongly as his predecessor had done in her four successive victories since 2002.

# Why does adult social care matter?



Councillor Izzi Seccombe OBE is Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board

**Brexit, perhaps unsurprisingly, leads the public's list of the single biggest issues facing the country (32 per cent), with the NHS, hospitals and healthcare coming second (14 per cent), according to pollster Ipsos Mori.**

What is surprising, given the growing media coverage of the agenda since last year's General Election, is that only 2 per cent of the public believe that 'ageing population/social care for the elderly' is the most important issue facing the country. As many commentators have observed, the provision of adult social care and support is now a major public service challenge given the increasingly difficult task of squaring rising demand with reducing resources.

In 2016, that task prompted the Care Quality Commission to speak of adult social care 'approaching a tipping point'. Today, others might argue we have already tipped. Whatever our precise location on the scales, one thing is clear: the long-term future of adult social care is far from secure. That is why the Government's forthcoming, and much-anticipated, Green Paper on care and support is so vitally important; it is a chance to build a system that is fit for future generations.

We have been here before, of course. In the last 20 years there have been several green and

Ahead of the much anticipated Green Paper on adult social care and support, the LGA is publishing a series of think pieces from sector experts addressing what a system fit for future generations might look like



*“How we care for our most vulnerable citizens is the true litmus test of whether we are a civilised society”*

white papers, commissions and independent inquiries. Consensus can be achieved with relative ease when it comes to defining the problem and articulating a vision for the future. What has proved far less easy – ultimately to the point of progress being derailed – is consensus on the key question of how, as a society, we should pay for adult social care and support.

Upon its publication, this could well be the section of the Green Paper that most people turn to first. Whether or not the answer to this

question will lead to this latest Green Paper suffering the fate of its predecessors and ending up in the long grass remains to be seen.

The LGA will be doing all it can to ensure it does not. As part of our efforts, we are publishing a series of think piece reports that address some of the key questions that cut to the heart of the debate about the future of adult social care and support. They are:

- Why does adult social care matter?
- Adult social care – a national or a local service?
- How should we pay for social care in the long term?
- Is consensus achievable?
- What are the stages to reform?

Our first publication starts from first principles and asks the question: why does adult social care matter? It seems a simple question to answer and in one sense it is – it's about improving people's lives.

But delve a little deeper and you uncover a

series of different answers that point to social care's importance to our communities, our economy and our very values as a country. Indeed, as the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said recently: "How we care for our most vulnerable citizens is the true litmus test of whether we are a civilised society". By his own admission, "we need to do better".

We are very grateful to the prominent colleagues (see box, right) who have contributed their views to this publication, which you can read online at [www.local.gov.uk/towards-sustainable-adult-social-care-and-support-system](http://www.local.gov.uk/towards-sustainable-adult-social-care-and-support-system). They have not only offered a powerful and persuasive answer to the question at hand, but they have also helped define what "better" should be.

As you read through them, and the LGA's headline position, I hope the content motivates you for the weeks and months ahead as we collectively work to secure the future of adult social care and support.



## Thoughts on social care

*“Social care is a relational business: so much depends on the quality of the rapport and communication established between those who deliver care and receive it...Life is altogether better for everyone, as well as more sustainable, if the efforts of informal carers are supported and complemented by those of high-quality paid carers.”*

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, Age UK

*“Adult social care matters because it improves people’s lives and, in turn, the communities in which we all live...The Green Paper must be used as an opportunity to help raise the profile of this vital service so that, in the years to come,*

*everyone could offer a response to ‘why adult social care matters’.”*

Lyn Romeo, Chief Social Worker for Adults

*“It is more important than ever to remind ourselves that only 10 per cent of health gain comes from health and care services. A social care service that connects the way in which we deliver social care to those wider factors that keep people well – such as work, housing, social interaction and friendships – is more needed than ever.”*

Kate Kennally, Chief Executive, Cornwall Council

*“It is a tough call for commissioners to prioritise social value over simple efficiency or the lowest price, but can we afford not*

*to when the prize is more resilient and sustainable communities in the longer term?”*

Dr Rhidian Hughes, Chief Executive, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group, and Chair, Care Provider Alliance

*“We need to direct a substantial part of our national wealth to supporting each other to have good lives in our communities... Right now, people don’t have rights to be supported well to live full lives in their own homes and communities or get the best care at vital times in life, as we operate a low resource, poorly paid and valued system, largely of last resort.”*

Martin Routledge, Convenor, #socialcarefuture

# Professional Development



## In-house, open access and online

**With over 50 years of experience, no one has more practical knowledge of autism.**

### Autism and Mental Health Conference – 12 September, Leeds

This conference will provide tools and strategies to identify and provide targeted support for autistic children and adults who have mental health difficulties.

We also offer:

- Open access training events
- Online training modules
- Bespoke training packages
- Resources, workshops and guides
- In-house training
- Informative professional newsletters

**For more information visit:**

**[www.autism.org.uk/professionals](http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals)**

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427)



**Until everyone understands**

# Transforming care



Justin Hackney is Assistant Director Adult Care and Wellbeing at Lincolnshire County Council

Long-term investment is needed to help more people with learning disabilities move out of mental health hospitals and into the local community

Since its launch in 2015, the national Transforming Care programme has achieved a lot of progress in helping people with learning disabilities and autism to live in their local communities.

The brilliant work of professionals across local government and the NHS, in partnership with service users, families and carers, should be applauded.

In Lincolnshire, we are proud of our progress on improving outcomes for local people. We established our Transforming Care Partnership (TCP) in January 2016, and this was closely followed by our local plan.

Since then, our TCP has been successful in decommissioning a number of learning disability inpatient hospital beds and has reinvested some of the released funding into community, home-assessment and treatment services, including crisis intervention. Working alongside our well-established Integrated Assessment and Care Management Team and pooling budgets for adult social care and NHS continuing healthcare have been vital to the success of our TCP.

With the Transforming Care programme winding down from March 2019, however, there are a number of challenges ahead. The National Audit Office's report, 'Local support for people with a learning disability,' laid bare four key challenges to progress: a lack of appropriate accommodation; the flow of money from hospital provision to community services; a lack of effective workforce strategies; and that care and treatment reviews (CTRs) do not always happen. Our experience in Lincolnshire has revealed some further possible challenges with which councils will need to get to grips.

Demand for learning disability and autism services is increasing, both in terms of the number of people who need support and people having more complex needs. In Lincolnshire, we have also seen a significant increase in the price of care, driven by reducing spare capacity in the market for care services, but also from increasing



*“As overall demand for services increases, the need for inpatient hospital care will also grow without proper long-term investment in alternative community services”*

provider costs. Discharges from inpatient services have added to these pressures.

New guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on service design and delivery for people with learning disabilities

supports Transforming Care's emphasis on avoiding hospital admissions by improving the quality and availability of care in the community, and by the use of care and treatment reviews. A member of our TCP helped to develop the NICE recommendations and we are committing, locally, to review our services against the guidance so we can drive further quality improvement.

As overall demand for services increases, the need for inpatient hospital care will also grow without proper long-term investment in alternative community services.

While care and treatment reviews are excellent in helping to avoid unnecessary inpatient admissions, the principle that the funding should follow the patient does not apply to new demand, and poses a significant challenge to councils and clinical commissioning groups as they plan future learning disability services.



Details of Lincolnshire's local transformation of services and outcomes for the people we support are available on the NHS Transforming Care website, [www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/tcp/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/tcp/). The NICE guidance can be found at [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng93](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng93)



## Member support

Each year the LGA surveys member councillors and officers to ensure we are working on the issues that matter most to you

Providing a single voice for local government, giving up-to-date information about the sector and lobbying on its behalf are the three most useful things the LGA does, according to you, our members.

In a recent representative poll of more than 1,000 councillors and officers, 90 per cent or more listed these three roles as the most important. Managing local government's reputation in the national media, organising conferences and events, and providing advice and information through the LGA's political group offices were also rated highly.

Nearly three in five of you (59 per cent) feel the LGA demonstrates value for money, up from 43 per cent in 2012. Support for sector-led improvement has also increased significantly over the same period, up from 59 to 78 per cent, and up eight percentage points in the last year. Most of you would speak positively about the LGA to others and are satisfied with the work of the LGA (73 per cent for both).

LGA support is valued in all the areas outlined in the report – including help with efficiency savings, service transformation and income generation (93 per cent); peer challenge and peer support (93 per cent); and training for councillors (91 per cent).

When asked what new areas of support they would like to see provided by the LGA, 70 per cent cited emergency planning and resilience, and 62 per cent children's services.

Four in five respondents (80 per cent) feel that the LGA keeps them informed about its work. **first** magazine remains the most

*“Your views are important to us and they influence and shape everything we do”*

popular method of finding out about the LGA (70 per cent, down six percentage points from the previous year), particularly among both senior and frontline councillors (both 84 per cent).

To ensure **first** continues to meet your needs, we are undertaking a review of the magazine's content and design, informed by a recent readership survey, and also have plans to improve the online version of the magazine (see [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)) and develop a new **first** e-bulletin.

Overall, seven in 10 feel that they know the LGA well (73 per cent), ranging from 96 per cent of chief executives and 94 per cent of leaders to 53 per cent of frontline councillors. On the whole, chief executives, directors and leaders have a greater knowledge of, and satisfaction with, the LGA, and more strongly positive views of sector-led improvement compared to frontline councillors.

The issue of engaging frontline councillors remains a challenge for us and continues to be addressed in our action plan for the year ahead.

For example, we know face-to-face contact with councillors and officers is highly valued, so we will continue to develop

our programme of visits to councils and ensure frontline councillors are involved wherever possible.

We will also offer feedback on peer reviews to full council and/or frontline councillors, and will continue to offer regional induction events for new councillors.

The LGA is also looking to further develop opportunities for engaging with frontline councillors by involving them more in #OurDay, our annual tweetathon (see **first** 617), and Local Democracy Week.

We will also be promoting our offer of five free places per LGA political group for frontline councillors at the LGA's annual conference, and looking to promote our parliamentary bulletin to a wider range of councillors.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: “Thank you to everyone who took part in this year's survey. Your views really are important to us and they influence and shape everything we do.

“While overall satisfaction with the LGA remains high, we need to make sure we continually review what we are doing, focusing on the things that matter to you.”

**i** If you have any ideas for stories for **first**, please email

[karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk),

or drop into the LGA's hub at its annual conference at Birmingham's International Convention Centre from 3-5 July for a chat about the magazine and **firstonline**

# Devolution revolutionaries

England has one of the most centralised governance systems in the world. Lots of decisions are taken in Westminster that affect communities far away from London.

So devolution – the transfer of power and funding from national to local government – is important because it ensures that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect. It should give greater freedoms and flexibilities at a local level, meaning councils can work more effectively to improve public services for their area.

Combined authorities – most with a directly elected mayor – have been the main vehicle for recent devolution deals. While established by Parliament, combined authorities are locally owned and have to be initiated and supported by the councils involved. They are also far more robust than an informal partnership or even a joint committee.

Labour’s Dan Jarvis MP was elected Mayor of Sheffield City Region just last month (May). But the other six established mayors came into office in 2017, and here they reflect on their first years in office, and how devolution is making a difference.



Tim Bowles (Con) is Mayor for the West of England

## The big picture

I’m here to look at the big picture, working with partners to plan for the future growth of our region.

We’re already making a difference, investing in those things that will improve all our lives – better transport, better jobs, and more homes. We’re supporting businesses to grow and boosting residents’ skills and opportunities.

I’ve worked hard to develop strong relationships across government departments. Because of this, the West of England is seen as a key player, leading to £150 million in extra investment this year, including £80 million for transport, and millions more to progress housing development, a 5G trial, and our new skills programme, Future Bright. This is money that wouldn’t be coming to our region without devolution.

As I start my second year, my plans are stepping up a gear. Transport continues to be a priority – I’m particularly passionate about improving suburban rail. Building more homes, particularly affordable homes, is another, while skills will also take centre stage over the coming year. We have many high-quality jobs and we need to give locally grown talent every opportunity to secure employment.

Devolution has given us the opportunity to do things differently, and much has been achieved – but there’s so much more we can do.

*“We need to give locally grown talent every opportunity to secure employment”*



Andy Burnham (Lab) is Mayor of Greater Manchester

## Making a difference

Over the past 12 months, devolution has started to make a real difference to the lives of everyone across Greater Manchester and has allowed us to make decisions that positively affect our communities.

We have made real progress in tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping in Greater Manchester – making 270 homes available for the most vulnerable homeless people and helping more than 500 homeless people register with a GP.

We also want to help keep Manchester moving and have introduced half-price bus and tram travel for thousands of 16 to 18-year-olds, as well as giving 14,000 women affected by state pension age changes free off-peak public transport with the Women’s Concessionary Bus Pass.

One of our aims is to make Greater Manchester the UK’s number one digital city region and we have secured a £25 million investment to deliver full-fibre broadband technology to help us do this.

We have made important strides in a number of other areas, including making Greater Manchester a great place to grow old, making communities safer and stronger, and creating a world-leading green city region. But our work does not stop now and we will continue to build on the last 12 months as we move forward.

*“We have made real progress in tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping”*



Ben Houchen (Con) is Mayor of Tees Valley

## Gathering momentum

It was an honour to be elected as the first Tees Valley Mayor, an area which I’ve always called home.

No-one knows the region better than those that live here. That’s why, over the past year, through local decision making, we have rapidly gathered momentum.

Around £51 million has been invested in diverse projects and programmes, supporting the creation of 4,000 jobs. That figure is expected to more than double to £104 million next year.

We have recently launched a £3 million careers initiative, TeesValleyCareers.com. It is the first of its kind in the UK, targeting every school and college – almost 100,000 students.

It will unite more than 1,000 local businesses with 11 to 18-year-olds to inform them directly of jobs and career opportunities in the region, with each child receiving seven direct and meaningful engagements with employers.

We are going above and beyond to do everything possible to equip our young people with the skills they need to flourish, and provide businesses with the expertise they need to grow.

The greatest enemy to progress is complacency, and to coast when we should be decisive. This is not ‘job done’, it’s just the beginning.

*“Our £3 million careers initiative is the first of its kind in the UK”*



Details of all powers and funding that have been devolved to individual areas can be found on the **Devolution Register**, see [www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-register](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-register). For general information about devolution and combined authorities, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution)



**James Palmer (Con)** is Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

## Delivering for people

The public rightly expects clear benefits from devolution and for me, that's all about delivery. While transforming transport infrastructure, tackling the housing crisis and addressing skills shortages will take time, we are also focused on what we can deliver for people right now.

That's why part of my focus has been on fast delivery of projects such as innovative community land trust housing schemes, reopening Soham railway station, and getting the ball rolling on a university for Peterborough. Such initiatives fit in with our longer-term goals, while giving people current examples of how the combined authority is working for them.

The interim findings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review, chaired by Dame Kate Barker, said our area has three distinct economies.

We have one of the UK's fastest growing cities in Peterborough, the nationally important Fens agriculture, and a world-famous innovation economy in Greater Cambridge. Each area has distinct challenges to meet to push growth further forward.

From a metro system with tunnelling serving Greater Cambridge, to addressing skills shortages in Peterborough, to improving road and rail connectivity in the Fens, we must deliver for people in ways that prove the combined authority really can be transformative both now and in the future.

*“Each area has distinct challenges to meet to push growth further forward”*



**Steve Rotheram** is Mayor for the Liverpool City Region

## A brighter future

At the end of a very busy inaugural year as mayor, it is good to have the opportunity to look back and reflect.

Devolution means that decisions on the things that affect us are taken here, rather than in Westminster.

We are working to deliver a 21st century transport system, a cleaner environment, an education and skills system that raises aspirations and lets our young people thrive, and economic growth that benefits everyone.

Working together with our six constituent councils, we have achieved a great deal so far. We are delivering an investment programme worth more than £1 billion, to drive improvements in transport, skills, economic development and housing. Our region boasts some of the finest assets in the country and we must make better use of them to benefit everyone.

We can become Britain's energy coast for renewables and the most digitally connected region in the country. That's why we've established the Mersey Tidal Power Commission to harness the tidal power of the River Mersey and we've started work on bringing ultra-fast internet to the region.

I stood as mayor because I believe that devolution is a game-changer. One year on, I'm more convinced than ever that we are making real progress towards a brighter future.

*“Devolution means that decisions on the things that affect us are taken here”*



**Andy Street (Con)** is Mayor of the West Midlands

## Restoring pride

If I were to try to summarise the first 12 months of the mayoralty, it would be a year in which the West Midlands regained its swagger.

Restoring pride in a region that has for some time underperformed relatively, was a key aim.

Already we have collectively worked to secure the Commonwealth Games for Birmingham and the City of Culture for Coventry, showing clearly that not only does this region know how to win once again, but it understands the value of working as a team.

That sense of teamwork has also underpinned the wins we have been able to secure from Government – the second devolution deal, the housing deal and the transport investments that have only been possible because we have demonstrated to the powers that be that we are united in our approach to rebalancing the UK economy.

Of course, there is so much more to be done. We need to deliver on our part of the deals agreed.

But we will also be looking to lead the way on skills and secure a deal with government that will help us to tackle the biggest barrier we face – the skill level of our population.

*“Not only does this region know how to win once again, but it understands the value of working as a team”*

# interview

## An independent voice

Councils need to understand the financial risks they face, warns **Abdool Kara**, Executive Leader, Local Services, at the National Audit Office



If he hasn't read it already, new Communities Secretary James Brokenshire should take a look at the National Audit Office's recent report on the financial sustainability of local authorities.

So says Abdool Kara, former Chief Executive of Swale Borough Council and now, since February 2017, Executive Leader, Local Services, at the spending watchdog.

The report warns that councils' financial health is getting worse, as they struggle "to juggle higher demands and cost pressures against significant central government funding cuts of nearly 50 per cent since 2010/11" (see **first** 622).

It is also critical of government's departmentalised understanding of the sector, saying it has "no single view of how funding cuts are impacting the whole of local authority services". At a time when councils are prioritising social care spending, this unintentionally risks reducing local services to a "core offering centred on social care".

Mr Kara says the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has made progress on "knitting together a wider picture" of local government services, but it's "not yet where it could or should be".

"There are 13 departments that have some interest in local government services and the accountability statement by the MHCLG is clear about its role, but perhaps slightly less clear about other departments' roles," he adds.

"Our report is clear that the next comprehensive spending review (CSR) is a real opportunity and an important time to bring that all together. We're happy to support the ministry in thinking about how it might do that. It's a fairly challenging job."

Mr Kara identifies social care – both children's and adults' – as probably the two biggest financial challenges facing councils, with homelessness also picking up, particularly in London and the South East.

*“If all the care homes in your area are about to go under, how would you prevent that, and what would your contingency arrangements be?”*



© CHRIS SHARP/LGA

“Our general exhortation to the sector is always understand your cost drivers, and understand the reasons for variations across local authorities,” he says.

“There is lots of experimental work going on with things like assistive technology in adult social care, and looking at machine learning and big data for spotting patterns of need, and [developing] early intervention and prevention around patterns of need.

“We see an awful lot of innovation across the sector – driven, in part, by need, partly by the financial challenge.”

The National Audit Office (NAO) is doing some work on the health and social care interface, to coincide with the LGA’s annual conference in July, where Comptroller and Auditor General Sir Amyas Morse will be speaking. Later this year, it is also due to publish a report on children’s social care.

“That is looking very much at the evidence around demand management, early intervention and prevention, to reduce needs and, therefore, costs,” says Mr Kara.

“I think our work shows that the adult social care sector is probably slightly further advanced than the children’s social care sector in terms of self-improvement, understanding good practice, best practice models and so on. Children’s social care needs to catch up on that side.

“The Association of Directors of Children’s Services is aware of that, and there is a lot

of support coming through, both from the LGA and the Department for Education. The department has research looking into demand management and different practices across local authorities. It’s an area where there are a lot of players and activities... and something we will continue to keep a watching brief on.”

The perilous state of the private care-home market – which the LGA estimates needs an immediate cash injection of £1.3 billion to prop it up – is another risk factor for councils struggling with social care funding and rising demand for services.

Earlier this year, the NAO published a report on the adult social care workforce, which said the Department of Health and Social Care is not doing enough to support a sustainable social care workforce.

It called for a “robust” national workforce strategy, and for the department to invest more to enable service commissioners to set appropriate fees for providers, so they can pay staff adequately and afford to offer staff career development and training opportunities.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to manage their local care markets, but Mr Kara suggests that most councils aren’t big enough to do this on their own.

He adds: “You can only start that process [of managing care markets] from understanding your local providers, and

that’s not just numbers, but different types of care, the profile of different providers, and the financial risks they face.

“We know that some of the bigger social care providers across the country have had challenges – we saw Southern Cross close a few years ago. So we would always say to local authorities, start from an understanding of both the financial risks and the workforce risks, which was what our workforce report was about. How exposed are you to a threat of a reduction of workers from EU withdrawal, for example? It’s only from that evidential starting point that local authorities can then plan.

“Understand the risks. If all the care homes in your area are about to go under, how would you prevent that, and what would your contingency arrangements be?”

In children’s services, Mr Kara identifies the availability of specialist provision as a financial and service challenge, leading to children in need being placed far away from home. Rising needs and demand are also outstripping funding for special educational needs (SEN), and an NAO report on SEN is due out later this year.

Meanwhile, Mr Kara’s team is in the middle of compiling a series of reports on housing issues. Last September’s report on homelessness concluded the problem had increased across all measures since 2010, “with many local authorities now seeing it >



> as a risk to their financial sustainability”.

Mr Kara highlights how welfare reform has been a contributory factor in rising homelessness – something acknowledged by the MHCLG – alongside the failure to build enough new homes for 30 or 40 years, and rising costs in the private rented sector.

“If tenants can’t afford a rent because of the local housing allowance rate – and that’s what’s made them homeless – then, if they are staying in the same area, why would they suddenly be able to afford a rent unless their circumstances changed – they got a job, or an older child left the household?

“We’re seeing that constant pressure. While the Government has put in some fairly high-profile initiatives and targets, rough sleeping – while worse for the individual involved – is a much smaller problem in quantum terms than statutory homelessness, where people are living in temporary accommodation, whether that’s B&B, leasing or hostel.”

New duties on councils to help prevent homelessness came into effect in April, supported by some funding from government, but Mr Kara said he would be surprised if more money was not needed when progress is reviewed.

Meanwhile, the NAO is working on new reports on planning’s role in housing delivery (due early 2019) and the Government’s multi-billion pound ‘Help to Buy’ scheme (due spring 2019).

Next year will be a critical one for local authority financial management. Mr Kara notes there will be a number

of changes coming into play, as a result of moves towards 100 per cent business rates retention, the ongoing fair funding review, and the comprehensive spending review.

“That has the potential to create significant winners and losers, and what always happens – this is not a party political point – is you then have transitional arrangements. So the transitional arrangements in themselves become a bit of a political football about how fast you ‘damp’ those changes,” he says.

“Irrespective of anything else, a lack of long-term financial certainty – even if it’s reductions [in funding] – militates against good, long-term financial planning.”

The NAO reported last year on implementing business rates retention, noting risks and concerns.

“There will be winners and losers. Some places will grow faster than others. Some places will have their demand and costs go up faster than business rates might go up,” says Mr Kara.

“The Government has already said there will continue to be a redistributive mechanism, and we understand the desire for there to be an incentive mechanism. The balance between the two is really for government to determine, while noting the risks.

“For example, the incentive within business rates is to grow companies that have floor space – and they aren’t always the most cutting edge or value adding, value-generating types of business. We are effectively saying to the Government, think very carefully about if this is your intention.”

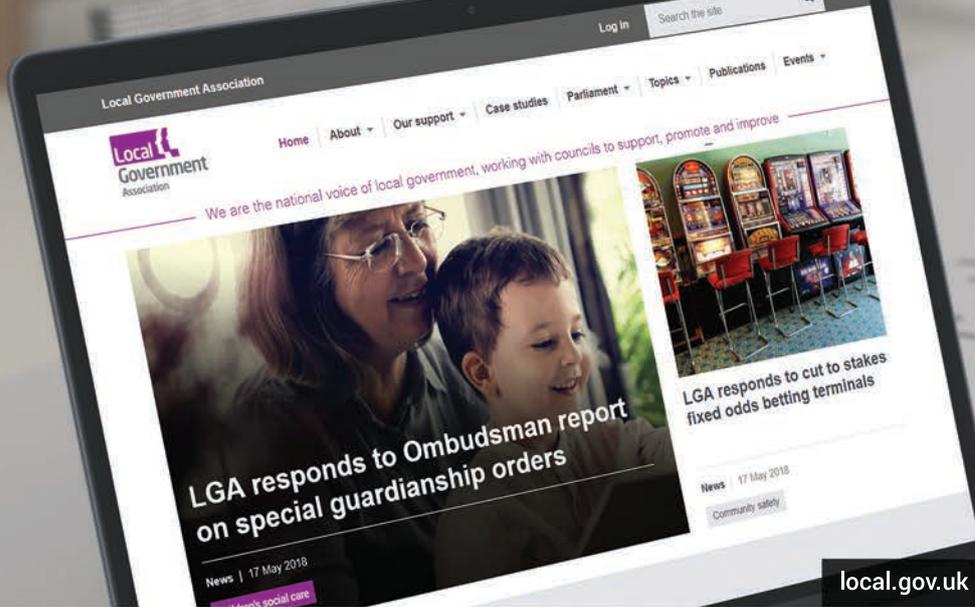
Mr Kara is keen to emphasise the NAO’s interest in local public services. His own role is outward facing to the local government sector, and he also covers education, skills and health. The NAO wanted to recruit someone who understood the sector and was well-connected to it, and four of its five board members have particular interests in local government and services.

“The majority of the sector is pleased to have a powerful, independent voice, such as ourselves, speaking compellingly to Parliament about what is happening in local government,” he adds.

“At the moment, we feel very welcome. That might not always be the case, but I can’t imagine it won’t be for the next few years.”



For more information about the National Audit Office, please visit [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)



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# comment

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## Equal investment for health and care



Councillor Huw David is the Welsh LGA's Spokesperson for Health and Social Care

**This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service. Rightly regarded as a groundbreaking social experiment, the vision of its pioneering Welsh architect, Nye Bevan, continues to be a source of pride for British people.**

However, 70 years on, it's clear that the health of the nation cannot be improved by the NHS alone. Social and preventative services also play a crucial role in caring for the population. A recent report by charity The Health Foundation recognises that key determinants of health are largely outside the control of health services. As a result, the quality of – and spending on – social care has one of the strongest impacts on the demand for health care.

But social care in Wales is facing huge challenges, all of which put increasing pressure on the valuable services that protect some of our most vulnerable people, and the workers who care for them – and, ultimately, risks the very survival of the NHS.

It has been estimated that pressures on adult social care in Wales will rise by around 4.1 per cent a year in real terms between 2015 and 2030/31, because of changing demography, chronic conditions and rising costs. This will require the budget to almost double, to £2.3 billion, by 2030/31 to match demand. Next year, Welsh social services will face additional pressures of £99 million, relating either to direct



workforce costs or indirect third-party providers, leaping to £344 million by 2021/22.

The Welsh Government has offered a welcome degree of protection for health and social care budgets against some of the horrific cuts wielded in England. Its willingness to engage in dialogue with councils and provide additional funding to cope with winter pressures has resulted in only a fraction of the bed blocking seen in England because of the decimation of services in the community.

While we are grateful to the Welsh Government for its recent £10 million funding to support winter pressures, it's clear that one-off boosts are not enough to cover increasing financial pressures – let alone significantly increased demand and cost pressures in the future. Bold and radical long-term solutions are urgently needed.

The Parliamentary Review into Health and Social Care in Wales has called for a shift away from treatment and crisis management to an integrated system based on prevention and

early intervention. For this to truly happen, we all need to rethink how we approach health and social care.

I look forward to joining influential speakers at our forthcoming Welsh LGA Annual Conference in Llandudno in a few weeks' time, to discuss the future relationship between the NHS and social care. Despite gloomy predictions for health and social care, I am firmly of the view that we have much to look forward to – as long as councils and the NHS receive equal investment in future years and are committed to work together.

By working together, with adequate resources, to integrate health and social care, we'll be better prepared to face future challenges and we can ensure that such services are protected. If we don't owe it to Nye Bevan to secure an integrated healthcare system that is fit for purpose, we certainly owe it to our children and future generations.

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*“One-off funding boosts are not enough to cover increasing financial pressures, let alone significantly increased demand and cost pressures”*

**i** The Welsh LGA's annual conference and dinner takes place on 23 June at Venue Cymru, Llandudno. For more information and to book a place, please visit [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WLGA2018/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WLGA2018/)

## group leaders' comments

### A sound position for the future

*“The LGA’s Independent Group has held its own despite pressures from the major parties”*

Congratulations to all those who stood for election in May and won the right to represent your residents – I wish you every success.

Particular congratulations, and a warm welcome, to anyone who is a councillor for the first time and a new member of the LGA’s Independent Group. I look forward to meeting you as you engage and benefit from the activities of the group.

Congratulations and thanks also to those who helped and encouraged other councillors with their campaigning.

Commiserations if you have not been returned this time. Particular thanks go to Peter Reeve MBE for his three years as our group’s Deputy Leader, to Lisa Duffy as

our Treasurer, and departing members Liz Hazell and Graham Whitham for their time representing us on the LGA’s City Regions and Resources Boards.

UKIP ousted the Labour leader of Derby City Council but, aside from that, have struggled to regain their feet this year, losing some excellent members. However, the LGA’s Independent Group has held its own despite pressures from the major parties, welcoming more new Green Party members and an increase of Independents. Our group is in a sound position for the future.

Continuing the theme of change, our Independent Group leadership elections are in full swing, and I look forward to being joined by a new deputy leader and treasurer,



Councillor Marianne Overton MBE is Leader of the LGA’s Independent Group

who I’m sure will support our group well.

I’d like to thank those who have attended and hosted our spring regional meetings. It is great to work with so many motivated and proactive councillors. I look forward to meeting more of you, particularly our new members. If you have any suggestions for topics you would like to see on the agenda for your next regional meeting, please email [independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk](mailto:independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk).

It is really exciting to see Independent Group members working to recruit and promote smaller party and independent politics at our Be a Councillor campaign and regional events. Keep up the good work, and do let the group office know if you would like to get involved.

## chairman’s comment

### Democracy in action



Lord Porter is Chairman of the LGA

It’s only a month ago that I last wrote for **first**, but a lot has happened since then – not least, that we have a new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It is brilliant that James Brokenshire got stuck into things so quickly. Just the afternoon after he got the call from the Prime Minister, he was answering MPs’ questions, and I was pleased to be able to catch up with him that evening.

He also stepped up to the plate on Grenfell, announcing he will consult on the banning of combustible materials on high-rise buildings, after this was not

included in the final report of the Hackitt review into building regulations.

It is also good news that his predecessor Sajid Javid remains in the Cabinet. It is always good to have an ally of local government sitting around that table, and this will be especially important in the coming year as we know he will play a leading role in the discussions ahead of our exit from the EU.

I would like to thank Sajid for his engagement with us over the past two years. We will be working with him and his team in his new role, on issues such as asylum-seeking children and tackling serious violence.

I would also like to welcome all newly elected and re-elected councillors taking

up their seats following last month’s local elections. The LGA continues to campaign on your behalf on the issues that matter to local government, particularly the need for our sector to be adequately funded.

We have shown that we can deliver more for less, but there is a limit to how much more we can do and some councils have reached it.

No-one is expecting the Government to suddenly find a big magic money tree. But local services are going to have to be delivered so a solution needs to be found, particularly to the challenges facing adult social care and children’s services.

*“We have shown that we can deliver more for less, but there is a limit to how much more we can do and some councils have reached it”*



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

## Fighting elections is a team effort

*“Our dominance in local government is all the more remarkable given that we have been in power nationally for eight years”*

Following the local elections, we have retained our dominant position in local government with control of almost twice as many councils as Labour and more than 2,500 more councillors.

Particular congratulations are due to colleagues in Basildon, Pendle and Peterborough, which we gained from no overall control, and Redditch, which we gained from Labour. Also noteworthy was our success in Nuneaton and Bedworth, where we won nine seats, moving the council to no overall control. That we came so close to taking control, despite only half of the seats being contested, is testament to the efforts of our Vice-Chairman for Local Government, Marcus Jones MP, and his local team.

Our dominance in local government is all the more remarkable given that we have been in power nationally for eight years, during which time the Government has had to make difficult financial decisions. By contrast, eight years into the last government, in a much more favourable economic climate, Labour had lost thousands of seats and scores of councils.

We also have a new Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with James Brokenshire replacing Sajid Javid.

I look forward to working with James, who I know well as a result of previous work on refugee issues. I would also like to thank Sajid for his support and wish him well in his important new role.



**Councillor Nick Forbes**  
is Leader of the LGA's Labour  
Group

## Grenfell must never happen again

*“It is disappointing that the Hackitt Review has not recommended an outright ban on combustible cladding”*

The upcoming first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire will be a sobering reminder of the scandalous failures that led to the tragic loss of 72 lives.

What many will not comprehend is why it is only now that the Government is making good on its promise to do ‘whatever it takes’ to remove similarly dangerous cladding from high-rise blocks across the country, when councils have warned time and time again that they couldn’t afford to replace it on the properties they own without significant financial assistance from government.

It is similarly disappointing that the Hackitt Review has not recommended an outright ban on combustible cladding. My Labour colleague, John Healey MP, is right that ministers must not simply accept the report as the “recommendations are too weak to overhaul the current system”.

Here at least, the Government can show that it has listened, and is learning – and I hope that the announcement that it will consult on banning combustible cladding will result in swift action to do so.

Everyone in power has a responsibility to make sure that a tragedy like Grenfell can never happen again. Local councils have proven that we are willing to play our part, and I hope that central government is now going to give us the support we need.



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

## Hard-won gains in tough campaigns

*“The election fight was tough against Labour with also a resurgent Tory party to deal with”*

The ballot boxes have been packed up, and the local elections are over for another year. While much of the media coverage focused on the London contests, elections were held across the country, including some hard-fought and tough campaigns.

Overall, we gained four councils and 75 councillors, with Three Rivers, Richmond, Kingston and South Cambridgeshire becoming majority Liberal Democrat administrations.

We kept control of Eastleigh, South Lakeland, Sutton, Cheltenham, and Watford – where we kept the elected Mayor, with Peter Taylor replacing Dorothy Thornhill.

In the greater North, the election fight was tough against Labour with also a resurgent Tory party to deal with. Pendle is now Conservative-run and, in a number of places, colleagues lost seats or failed to make the gains they had worked so hard for. I want to put on record my personal thanks for all their hard work.

However, it was fantastic to see Liberal Democrats gain seats in places including Sunderland, Sheffield, Hull, Haringey and Barnsley. Seats gained from the Conservatives included Winchester, where we are just a couple of seats short of winning control.

Congratulations to those who won their seats and commiserations to those who didn’t win this time round.

We look forward to working with our newly elected Liberal Democrat councils and councillors and making good use of these results to push for Liberal Democrat values within the LGA.



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

## Appointment to LGA governance structures 2018/19

Each year the Local Government Association (LGA) Independent Group Executive considers applications from its members for appointments to the LGA governance structures. All Independent Group members are able to apply for appointments. The **deadline for submission of applications for appointments is Monday 9 July 2018.**

## Annual General Meeting 2018

The LGA Independent Group will hold its **2018 AGM** on **Tuesday 3 July, between 10.00am and 11.30am, at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham,** as part of the LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition. Attendance at the AGM is free of charge for councillors in Group membership.

Members submitting Notices of Motion to the AGM must attend the meeting in person to speak to the motion, or send a nominated Independent Group member as a substitute to speak on their behalf. **Deadline for submission of motions is Friday 15 June 2018.**

If you would like an application form for LGA appointments or to register your attendance at the Group AGM, please contact **Dr Toby Ganley**, Head of the Independent Group Office: [toby.ganley@local.gov.uk](mailto:toby.ganley@local.gov.uk) or **020 7664 3206**

# A voice for unitary councils



**Councillor Paul Bettison** is Chairman of the Unitary Councils' Network and Leader of Bracknell Forest Council

**The LGA supports a number of special interest groups representing different kinds of councils – including the District Councils' Network, the County Councils Network and the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities.**

Until recently, however, unitary councils have been unique in lacking their own voice. It came to a head when we started talking to central government about the repatriation of business rates to local authorities, because unitaries have a particular position not shared by others, in that all the business rates come to us and there is no sharing between two tiers.

So two years ago, we held an exploratory meeting of all the unitary council leaders. Everybody who attended said it was a good idea to have our own network, so we applied

to the LGA Executive, and our proposal was approved earlier this year.

Currently, we have 21 members out of the 51 unitary councils in England. At our first meeting, we agreed that county unitaries that are members of the County Councils Network should remain with the CCN, but we will reconsider this issue if necessary.

In addition to the interest in business rates retention, which helped trigger the creation of the network, we have many other areas of common interest. Adult and children's social care pressures and funding remain of vital importance to smaller, all-purpose authorities such as mine.

We would like to have a say on advancing unitary status after the recent ministerial approval of plans to replace the current two-tier councils in Dorset with two new unitary authorities. We also want to discuss Brexit negotiations and economic growth; innovation and sharing

*“We would like to have a say on advancing unitary status, Brexit negotiations and sharing best practice, particularly for smaller authorities”*

best practice, particularly for smaller authorities; local government reorganisation and devolution; and negative revenue support grant (RSG), which is looming for some of our members.

We have quite a few things to get on with, so I hope leaders of unitary authorities will be able to join us at our next meeting.



Please email [paul.bettison@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:paul.bettison@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) for more information about the Unitary Councils' Network. To find out about the LGA's special interest groups, visit [www.local.gov.uk/special-interest-groups](http://www.local.gov.uk/special-interest-groups)



# A new solution for local good causes



**Councillor Janet Blake (Con)** is Cabinet Member for Commercialisation and Business Transformation at Aylesbury Vale District Council

**As local authorities, it goes without saying that we're here to help improve the lives of people – our residents and communities are, essentially, why we exist.**

So what do we do when, despite the best will in the world, we simply can't support local people in the way we used to? If I had the answer, I'd be one popular lady!

It's a question we've had to consider repeatedly as austerity continues, and one that has left many authorities with no other choice than to cut services. Sometimes, however, there is another solution – and I'm proud to say, when it comes to supporting good causes, we've found a particularly innovative one at Aylesbury Vale District Council.

Before 2015, support for these groups came largely from our grants service – but, even then, this was on a programme of reductions because of central government cuts. It was obvious the situation was only going to get worse – so what could we do?

Off the back of this realisation, we developed Vale Lottery in 2015 – the country's

first online community lottery run by a local authority. Just two and a half years on, we've raised almost £170,000 for local causes, including sports clubs, disability groups, animal charities and more than 40 schools.

So, how exactly does this fantastic project work? Good causes sign up for free at [www.valelottery.co.uk](http://www.valelottery.co.uk) and get their own webpage. They then promote this to their supporters, who join up and buy tickets for £1 each.

Sixty pence from each ticket helps local causes – 50p of this goes directly to the chosen good cause and 10p to the council's Community Fund, which supports a range of organisations. The rest of the £1 ticket price goes towards running costs, VAT and the prize fund. The top prize is a cool £25,000 (this is underwritten by the insurers and doesn't come out of council funds).

We have more than 100 causes on board, and most are raising between £300 and £3,000 a year. This money is making a huge difference and is being spent on all manner of things – including computers for schools, subsidised horse-riding lessons for children with autism, a new children's library, and a support group for carers.

*“We've raised almost £170,000 for local causes, including sports clubs, disability groups, animal charities and more than 40 schools”*

You might be wondering who does all the work. Well, it's a joint effort – a wonderful example of co-production, if you like.

Gatherwell, our external lottery manager, runs the website, deals with enquiries and produces free promotional material for the good causes; we approve the organisations wanting to join, market Vale Lottery and manage the relationship with the Gambling Commission, and the good causes spread the word. Of course, the louder they shout, the more cash they raise.

More than 50 other councils have now started their own lotteries and we've had the pleasure of helping many of them to fast-track the process.



**If you'd like advice on how to get the ball rolling on a local lottery for your authority, please contact me at [jblake@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk](mailto:jblake@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk)**

# Stopping illegal dumps



Malcolm Lythgo is Head of Waste Regulation at the Environment Agency

Over the past two years, the Environment Agency's Operation Cesium has been investigating the illegal dumping of up to 25,000 tonnes of waste across sites in the Midlands, North West and North East.

The waste is a mix of household, commercial and industrial rubbish, wrapped like silage bales (pictured).

Illegal dumping and illicit waste sites are a huge drain on the limited resources of local authorities and the Environment Agency. Together, we spend a huge amount of time and money investigating and prosecuting those responsible, as well as millions of pounds clearing up the aftermath. Illegal waste sites cost the economy £600 million a year in England.

To combat these operations, we are investing in improving our intelligence

gathering, streamlining our processes and putting more officers on the ground. We need to be smarter in stopping this activity before it gets as far as bales of waste being dumped illegally.

In 2016/17, household and commercial waste was the primary type identified, at 37 per cent of illegal dumping incidents and 27 per cent of illegal waste sites that the Environment Agency tackled.

Much of this waste comes from householders and businesses who do not know – or care – where their rubbish is going. We want to increase awareness of the impact this activity has on people and

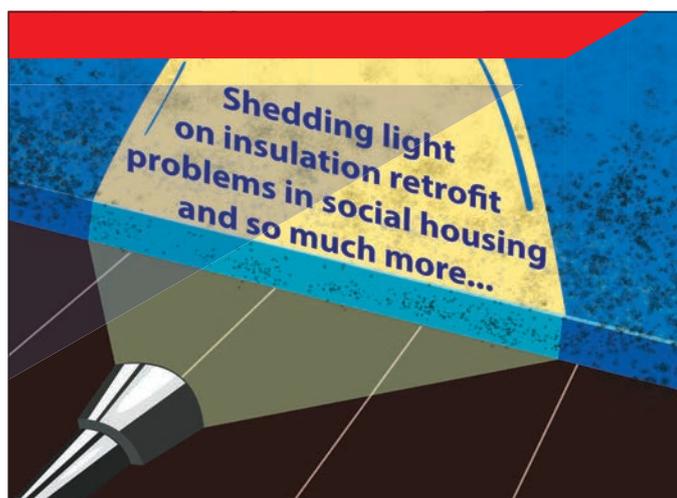


*“We want to work with others to stop waste getting into the hands of criminals”*

the environment, and ensure householders and businesses discharge their duty of care responsibly. We want to work with others to educate and inform, and stop waste getting into the hands of criminals.

That's why, right now, our communication teams across England are making contact with local authority communications teams, to help bring the responsibility message home to householders and businesses. We want people to know they can see if a waste carrier is legal by checking on our public register: [environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers](http://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers).

We also want people to report illegal waste activities to us directly, or to Crimestoppers anonymously at [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org) or by calling 0800 555 111.



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# parliament

## Financial sustainability



**The LGA has been campaigning for adequate funding for the sector, particularly to meet rising demands and costs for adult social care, children's services and homelessness.**

As part of this, we gave evidence to the influential Public Accounts Committee to inform its inquiry into the financial sustainability of local authorities. This follows a report earlier this year from the National Audit Office, which found that councils have had a 49.1 per cent real-terms reduction in funding since 2010/11 (see [first 622](#)).

Last month, our Chief Executive Mark Lloyd gave oral evidence to the committee, alongside Martin Reeves, Spokesman for Local Government Finance for the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives; Rob Whiteman, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy; and Duncan Whitfield, President of the Association of Local Authority Treasurers.

Mr Lloyd praised the amazing work of councils in responding to "perma-austerity" and managing £16 billion of central government funding reductions over the decade from 2010 to 2020. But he told MPs that there is a limit to what more can be done,

and the "pips are squeaking now".

"[Councils] have seen increased demands on children's services and adult social care, and homelessness places very significant pressure on them," he said.

"They have done the cutting, the efficiency, the sharing and the productivity improvements, but the harsh reality is that, by the end of this decade, councils will be short of funding to the tune of £5.5 billion. That is excluding the money that needs to be injected right now to prop up a very vulnerable care system for the adults we are all concerned about across the country."

Mr Lloyd told MPs the solution is to "grow the available funding we have got in local government".

"Business rate retention offers us one option, but the strong view of local government is that the eventual retention of 100 per cent of business rates should come with no new duties, so we can plug the funding gap of £5.5 billion and prop up the care market."

The priorities outlined by Mr Lloyd will be central to the LGA's campaigning and parliamentary work on behalf of councils, as we look to next year's spending review.

### Influencing legislation

More details have emerged of how the Government plans to ensure local government in the UK continues to be consulted about legislation affecting the sector after Brexit.

We currently have a formal advisory role in EU legislation through the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and ministers committed to finding a replacement procedure after lobbying by the LGA.

Now, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Minister Lord Bourne has written to members of the Lords updating them on progress towards replicating the consultative arrangements of the CoR.

He had told Peers that the Government envisages twice-yearly meetings between relevant ministers and the LGA, and the equivalent associations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The associations would produce written opinions on proposed legislation and policies, and the Government would publish a response, with copies of both papers put before Parliament. We will continue to work with officials on the details of the new arrangements.



For more information about the LGA's parliamentary work, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament)

# councillor

## Three decades a leader



Dennis Harvey OBE (Lab)  
recently retired as Leader  
of Nuneaton and Bedworth  
Borough Council

**I am writing this article just one week after retiring as a councillor of 45 years' standing, and with a further week to go before our annual council meeting, when I step down as Leader of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.**

It has been suggested that I am the longest-serving council leader in the country, having first been appointed in 1986 and continuing to the present day, with the exception of a brief period between 2008 and 2010.

During the time of my leadership, the world has changed enormously and the local government environment has also shifted, transformed by wave after wave of central government policy and ever-increasing spending pressures.

Over the years, there have always been challenges, but I have to say that the scale of the task facing local government right now is greater than I have ever known; similarly, the need for strong and effective leaders has never been greater.

The basic role of a council leader hasn't changed over my time – the main goal is to deliver high-quality, frontline services to the community we serve. From my point of view, this has meant surrounding myself with the best people and supporting them to get the job done; it has meant managing finances well, being sustainable – also creative – and sometimes brave to try new things.



**Dennis Harvey OBE retired on 16 May 2018** after 45 years as a councillor. Let us know about your long-serving colleagues by emailing [karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk)



I see the role of council leader as being a champion of the council's vision, continually keeping the focus on the big picture. Sometimes, this means taking a long-term view that may initially conflict with short-term pressures, a position I have occasionally found myself in over the years – most recently in making an early commitment to join the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), the first Warwickshire authority to do so. Holding strong to a vision is so important.

I am enormously proud of the borough I have represented. Nuneaton and Bedworth is a modest but thriving district at the heart of the country, with exceptional transport links. It's ideally placed within the industrial West Midlands to take advantage of the new opportunities brought about by the

*“The role of a council leader hasn't changed – the main goal is to deliver high-quality, frontline services to the community we serve”*

WMCA and other key regional players. With neighbouring Coventry being awarded City of Culture 202 and Birmingham securing the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the profile of our region has been boosted even further.

Moving forward, authorities such as Nuneaton and Bedworth will face many challenges, financial and otherwise. For me, one of the most significant is the need to make our town centres resilient to the onslaught of retail change that is ripping apart the traditional high street model. Councils need to rethink their approach and get creative – this is so important, because town centres are often the beating hearts of our communities.

Reflecting on my career, I remember most the wonderful people I have worked with and the strength of their commitment to public service. During my time as leader, the council has performed well and never had a strike against it – this is largely down to the excellent people I have been lucky enough to work alongside.

One piece of advice I do offer is always try to be inclusive, listen to the views of others and always treat people with respect. I hope, in my role as leader, that I have stuck to the advice of my parents when I was young. They said: “Don't forget... it's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice.”



# Help for first-time councillors

**Welcome to local government! Being a councillor is a great honour and gives you the chance to make a real difference to your local residents and the area you represent.**

But it is also hard work and can feel daunting when you are first elected. However, the LGA is here to help, in addition to the support you will receive from your own council, fellow elected members, and the wider local government family.

With more than 400 local authorities in membership across England and Wales, the LGA provides a vast network to share best practice with, and to support you in your various roles.

We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government, and as a councillor you will automatically have access to the full range of services that we offer.

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*“Despite the challenges, it’s an exciting time to play your part in the most trusted part of the public sector”*

One of the LGA’s key resources for new councillors is its recently updated ‘Councillors’ Guide 2018/19’. It provides a useful introduction to the LGA, outlining the practical support we can give to you and your council, as well as how we campaign on behalf of the sector on the issues that matter to us all.

These include social care, housing, devolution and keeping local government central to the Brexit negotiations – but top of the agenda is funding. We continue to call for the funding and powers we need to best serve our communities and for the flexibility to raise more funds locally. Against the backdrop of reductions in public sector funding, our work behind the scenes, and our collective legal actions on your behalf, have delivered some important wins, prevented additional burdens being placed on councils and secured funding that would not otherwise have been passed to the local level.

The guide also looks at the councillor role – in representing your local area, providing community leadership, developing council policy, and acting as a regulator, for example in planning and licensing.

It discusses the importance of standards in public life (the Nolan principles), offers a helpful introduction to what councils do and how local government is organised, how councils make decisions, and the key policy issues you will face.

There are also top tips on how to work well with council officers, plus information on devolution and combined authorities; workforce issues; the public sector equality duty; support for councillors and allowances; communications; media work; access to information and using data; local government finance; and overview and scrutiny.

As you settle into your new role, you will come to understand that local government is facing unprecedented challenges. There is less money in the pot but demands for services our residents rely on are increasing.

Despite this, it’s also an exciting time to play your part in the most trusted part of

the public sector. At its best, local government provides the strong and ambitious leadership that ensures the nation remains fit and well, economically resilient and continues to thrive.

The day-to-day life of a citizen is directly impacted by what we achieve as councillors, and we look forward to helping you carry out your new role to the best of your ability.

## Top tips

*“Think ‘so what?’ on behalf of your residents – what do decisions actually mean to those you represent?”*

Cllr Lynne Doherty (Con), West Berkshire Council

*“Go with your own gut. As a new councillor you hear lots of conflicting information from others about the role and what they’re doing in their area. It’s your role to shape and embrace.”*

Cllr Adam Ellison (Lab), South Tyneside Council

*“Get to know council officers in key departments and get to grips with any enquiry or information systems your council has – it will make dealing with enquiries and complaints far easier.”*

Cllr Rhys Taylor (Lib Dem), Cardiff City Council

*“Don’t be afraid to take a day off. Being a councillor is a 24/7 role that can take over your life if you allow it to.”*

Cllr Anna Charles-Jones (Ind), Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council



To find out more about the LGA, please visit [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk). The full ‘Councillors’ Guide 2018/19’ can be accessed online or downloaded as a PDF at [www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide](http://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide). Tell us about the challenges you are facing as a new councillor, by emailing [karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk)

# LGA18

THE **NATIONAL VOICE** OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
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3-5 JULY 2018 | [WWW.LOCAL.GOV.UK/CONFERENCE](http://WWW.LOCAL.GOV.UK/CONFERENCE)  
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**Dame Louise Casey DBE CB**



**Rt Hon Sir Vince Cable MP**  
Leader, Liberal Democrats



**Angela Rayner MP**  
Shadow Secretary of State  
for Education



**Sir Amyas Morse**  
Comptroller and Auditor General,  
National Audit Office



**Sara Khan**  
Lead Commissioner for  
Countering Extremism



**James Palmer**  
Mayor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Combined Authority



**Tim Shipman**  
Political Editor, The Sunday Times



**Sophie Walker**  
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