

# Local Government Association

## Queen's Speech – On the Day Briefing

19 December 2019



### Introduction

The Queen has today set out the Government's agenda for the next Parliamentary session. This paper details the new Bills of relevance to local government. Further details of today's Queen's Speech can be found on the Government's [website](#). You can also find out about our work engaging with Parliament on behalf of local government in our [LGA in Parliament 2018/19 report](#).

The LGA has circulated a number of media statements responding to today's announcement which can be found on our [website](#).

### LGA key messages:

- **#CouncilsCan:** By building new homes, creating jobs and school places, providing dignified care, and boosting economic growth, councils are a vital part of our democracy and the delivery of frontline services to communities. The LGA has been calling for a new devolution settlement for local areas and it is positive to see this Queen's Speech make commitments on a variety of issues which are important to residents.
- **Brexit:** The UK's departure from the European Union (EU) is an opportunity for the UK government, the LGA and councils to work together to ensure that through local government communities have a greater say over their futures, new opportunities are identified to grow local economies and the risks to local areas are managed carefully. As the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill passes through Parliament, we have produced [a briefing](#) to highlight the key opportunities and risks for communities and councils in advance of exit day on 31 January 2020.
- **Devolution:** Where EU laws are repatriated to the UK, it cannot mean leaving Brussels only to consolidate power in Whitehall, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont. Instead, the UK's departure from the EU must lead to further powers for local communities through local government. It is essential that a bold English devolution settlement is delivered in this Parliament. It is therefore a positive step that the Government has committed to re-ignite the process of English devolution.
- **Social care:** The LGA has long-called for a cross-party consensus on securing a sustainable future for adult social care, and as a cross-party organisation, we are happy to host the talks proposed in the Queen's Speech. We look forward to working with the Government to bring forward proposals at the earliest opportunity.
- **Council finances:** Giving councils greater financial freedoms and certainty of future resourcing will be essential in ensuring that local areas are adequately funded so that all parts of England can improve key services such as housing, transport, and health and social care. The new government needs to follow today's Queen's Speech by publishing the

# Briefing

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provisional 2020 Local Government Finance Settlement as soon as possible and no later than Parliament rising for the Christmas recess. This is critical if councils are to have the certainty and time they need to plan how to provide the vital local services our communities rely on next year.

- **Education:** It is positive to see the Queen's Speech commit to ensuring that all children have a high quality education. The Government's announcement to increase school's budgets for high needs so that local government can support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for 2020/21 will give councils more certainty. In the longer term, we want to see all schools become more inclusive so that more children with high needs can be appropriately supported in mainstream schools.
- **Environment:** It is good to see the reintroduction of the Environment Bill. We look forward to working with the Government on the principles set out in the Bill and the establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection.
- **Housing:** Councils are determined to tackle the homelessness crisis, which represents many thousands of individual tragedies and a national emergency. It is good to see the Queen's Speech bring forward measures to abolish no fault evictions. It is also key that we build homes of all tenures to provide people with opportunities to live in a safe and secure home and local government has an important role to play in achieving this ambition.
- **Infrastructure:** A National Infrastructure Strategy will be brought forward to set out a long-term vision to improve the nation's digital, transport and energy infrastructure. It is important that Government works with the LGA and councils to deliver on its infrastructure commitments, including fast and reliable digital connectivity.
- **Building safety:** The tragedy that unfolded at Grenfell Tower must never be allowed to happen again and it is important to ensure that high-risk buildings are safe. The building safety system needs urgent reform, so we are pleased that today's Queen's Speech includes legislation to enshrine a tough new system into law. We need a partnership between the new building regulator, councils and fire services, with local authorities given effective powers, including meaningful sanctions.
- **Domestic abuse:** Addressing all forms of domestic abuse is a high priority for councils and we are pleased to see the Government has listened to the LGA and others, by bringing forward legislation. We support the Domestic Abuse Bill's objectives of ensuring that people feel able to report abuse and are confident that organisations will do everything possible to support them and their families and pursue their abusers.

## **Bills and other measures announced which are relevant to local government:**

For further information on any of these Bills, please contact the [LGA public affairs team](#).

### **English Devolution**

*My government... will give communities more control over how investment is spent so that they can decide what is best for them.*

### **LGA View**

- The UK's departure from the EU gives central and local government an opportunity to rethink the way decisions are made in the UK. Where EU laws are repatriated to the UK, it cannot mean leaving Brussels only to consolidate power in Whitehall, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont. Instead, the UK's departure from the EU must lead to further powers for local communities through local government. It is essential that a bold English devolution settlement is delivered in this Parliament. The LGA therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to re-ignite the process of English devolution.
- Through a series of devolution deals a number of mostly urban areas have, over the last five years, demonstrated the benefits of giving local leaders greater power and resources. The commitment to 'level up' powers and investment in regions across England is therefore encouraging and will rightly build on this success. However, this approach must also give existing devolution deal areas the opportunity to reach their ambitions. Those areas able to move further and faster must be able to do so for the benefit of communities and business.
- While devolution to Mayoral Combined Authorities has worked in an urban context, this model may not be appropriate or necessary for all places, particularly non-metropolitan England. The future devolution of powers and investment should not therefore be contingent on the adoption of a Mayoral governance model and areas should be afforded the opportunity to propose their own governance arrangements that will ensure robust accountability and democratic oversight.
- Alongside a focus on boosting English productivity and economic growth, the Government has signalled that the return of powers from the EU will lead to a significant increase in the decision-making powers for the Devolved Administrations. The LGA welcomes today's announcement, and we are clear that this is a unique opportunity to devolve power to local communities right across the UK.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the ideal opportunity to empower communities through councils, Combined Authorities and their local areas to drive economic growth, increase prosperity and productivity and tackle deep rooted inequalities. Delivery of such change can best be achieved through a locally determined fund that operates alongside other funding the UK Government provides to help boost economic growth in local areas and which is at least the same quantum as under ESIF. There is an urgent need to consult with local areas and ensure that there is not a funding gap between the end of EU Structural Funds and UKSPF. We must not replace Brussels with the fund being administered through unelected bodies such as LEAs.

- To enable meaningful and self-sufficient financial management, further fiscal devolution is necessary. This could take the shape of assignment of national taxation (such as a share of fuel duty or income tax), further powers over existing local taxes (such as the abolition of the council tax referendum threshold and full control over discounts) and powers to create new levies, such as a local tourism levy or an e-commerce levy.

## **Constitution and democracy**

The Government has announced it will establish a Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission to develop proposals to restore trust in how our democracy operates that will:

- Examine the broader aspects of the constitution in depth and develop proposals to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy operates. Careful consideration is needed on the composition and focus of the Commission. Further announcements shall be made in due course.

The Government will also:

- Implement measures requiring an approved form of photographic ID at a polling station in a UK parliamentary election in Great Britain and local election in England. Any voter who does not have an approved form of ID will be able to apply, free of charge, for a local electoral identity document. (Voters are already required to show photographic ID to vote in elections in Northern Ireland.)
- Ban campaigners from handling postal votes, introducing a power to limit the number of postal votes a person may hand-in, and establishing a requirement on those registered for a postal vote to re-apply every three years (currently registration can last indefinitely).
- Limit the number of people a voter may act for as a proxy to two electors, regardless of their relationship.
- Require returning officers to provide equipment to support voters with sight loss and other disabilities who find it difficult to vote.
- Launch a consultation on electoral integrity that will consider measures to strengthen the provisions that protect our democracy from foreign interference and to refresh our laws for the digital age. This is part of our work to continue to safeguard our democracy, strengthen our resilience.

## **LGA view**

- The vote to leave the European Union has created the opportunity for a meaningful debate on the protection and prominence given to English local government. While there have been attempts in the past to consider and codify the constitutional position of councils, Britain's departure from the EU marks a fundamental break with the political landscape of the last 40 years.
- In democracies across the world the relationship between central and local government is enhanced through a formal constitutional relationship.
- The Charter of Local Self Governance is an international treaty of the

Council of Europe. It was adopted in June 1985 and ratified by the UK. The Charter provides a clear framework for subsidiarity and sub-national devolution and, to its credit, the UK is broadly compliant.

- As a clear step towards positioning the UK as a beacon of democracy, consideration should be given through the proposed Constitution, Democracy & Rights Commission to codifying the Charter. This would provide a new legal basis for local government built from the ground up, as part of a fundamental principle that local self-government shall be recognised in domestic legislation, and where practicable in the constitution.
- The LGA continues to call for the public intimidation of political candidates and those in public office, such as local councillors, to be made a specific offence. In our response to the Government's consultation on 'protecting the debate - intimidation, influence and information', the LGA supported the Government's consultation proposals to develop new electoral legislation to tackle intimidation.
- We are calling on the Government to include in the scope of the proposed Commission the impact on our democracy of intimidation against local and national politicians, as well as how the conduct of debate affects good decision making and community engagement. On 16 December 2019, the LGA, WLGA, COSLA and NILGA jointly launched their programme on 'civility in public life', and we would like to work with the Government and the Commission to address these issues. In the absence of new legislation, as a minimum we need clear and consistent guidance on what is reasonable protest and comment versus what crosses a line into abuse, intimidation and harassment, and how the latter will be tackled.
- Councils are hugely experienced at running elections, working to support communities participate in the democratic process effectively. Recent elections, called with extremely short notice, have run smoothly is testament to their incredible hard-work and expertise.
- Councils fully support proposals to ensure disabled people can cast their vote. New duties on councils will of course need to be fully funded to help ensure they work effectively and their intention to increase voter participation is realised.
- Councils will want to understand more about the proposals for voter identification, particularly any potential impact on protected groups and any new duties and costs.
- Given the scale of abuse of candidates and those in elected office, we are disappointed that Government has not taken the opportunity to introduce this legislation here.

## **Trade Bill**

*"My ministers will bring forward legislation to ensure the United Kingdom's exit on that date and to make the most of the opportunities that this brings for all the people of the United Kingdom."*

The purpose of the Bill is to:

Make the most of new opportunities that come from having an independent trade

policy after Brexit.

The main benefits of the Bill would be:

- Delivering the best international trading framework for the UK after Brexit by establishing in UK law the fundamental tools needed to do this.
- Ensuring that our trade policy reflects the needs and potential of the whole of the UK and helps to create a country that is more united and more outward looking than ever before.
- Enhancing the UK's central role in driving positive global change through trade.

#### **LGA view**

- Councils are uniquely positioned, with a deep knowledge of local economies, powers over local infrastructure planning and a strong track record of building connections with communities across the globe.
- As the UK renews its trading relationship with the world councils are ready to help attract new business investment into communities and drive exports particularly from small and medium sized enterprises that risk falling through the gap of existing support structures.
- Given the vital role that councils could play, the International Trade Select Committee has recommended that local government should have a voice in all aspects of the trade policy process. The LGA agrees and looks forward to working with the new Government to ensure that the expertise and strong international links of local government can best be harnessed as the UK enters into any future trade negotiations.
- Funding from the European Union currently underpins significant levels of local activity to promote trade and investment and the development of the detail to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is key.

#### **The Agriculture Bill**

*“My ministers will bring forward legislation to ensure the United Kingdom's exit on that date and to make the most of the opportunities that this brings for all the people of the United Kingdom.”*

The Agriculture Bill will reform UK agriculture, post EU Exit, by improving environmental protections and strengthening transparency and fairness in the supply chain.

#### **LGA view**

- There is now a significant opportunity post Common Agricultural Policy, to develop a new policy framework which will provide a place-based approach to land-use planning that better aligns with local priorities, ensures greater local accountability and protects the environment.
- Local government is a key stakeholder in the management of rural land working closely with farming communities and undertaking approximately 170 related statutory duties.

- As the Government explores how to reform future land management policy councils are ready to be partners in such reforms and to bring expertise to the table.

## **Social care reform**

*“My ministers will seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long term reform of social care. They will ensure that the social care system provides everyone with the dignity and security they deserve and that no one who needs care has to sell their home to pay for it.”*

The main elements of the reform are:

- The Government is providing councils with an additional £1 billion for adults and children’s social care in every year of this Parliament. In addition, the government will consult on a 2 per cent precept that will enable councils to access a further £500 million for adult social care for 2020-21. This funding will support local authorities to meet rising demand and continue to stabilise the social care system. This will help pay for more social care staff and better infrastructure, technology and facilities.
- The Government will urgently seek a cross-party consensus in order to bring forward the necessary proposals and legislation for long-term social care reform in England.
- In doing so, the Government will ensure that nobody needing care will be forced to sell their home to pay for it.
- The government has committed to providing £74 million over three years for additional capacity in community care settings for those with learning disabilities and autism. It will also improve how they are treated in law.

## **LGA view:**

- To enable people of all ages to live the lives they want to lead, and to support the NHS Long Term Plan, adult social care needs significant additional investment. The Government’s commitment to continue the £1 billion announced in the Spending Round in each year of the Parliament is therefore a positive first step, though it is not enough to meet all demand pressures. We would like to see a comparable approach to the NHS investment in terms of funds and enshrining that commitment in legislation. Next year’s multi-year Spending Review will provide a vital opportunity to further stabilise care and support and build towards the longer-term reforms that are desperately needed.
- Securing the sustainable, long-term future of adult social care and support is one of the major issues facing society. Our work over the last year and a half has sought to keep the debate in the public and political spotlight and we are committed to working with the Government to bring about meaningful change.
- We look forward to the Government setting out its thinking at the earliest opportunity. Proposals will need to be practical and workable so that adults of all ages are supported to live the lives they want to lead. This means ensuring that the current system is adequately funded, as well as introducing reforms which improve access to care and pool the financial risk so individuals do not face catastrophic costs. The LGA, as a cross-

party organisation, has previously offered to host and facilitate cross-party talks and that offer remains open to the Government. After many years of failed attempts at reform, local government is eager to see - and support - meaningful and lasting change for the benefit of all people who use and work in adult social care and support.

- Investment in community care settings for people with a learning disability and/or autism will build upon important progress through the Transforming Care Programme. It will help to further reduce the number of inpatients through the commissioning of services to enable people to live good lives in the community.
- It is essential that people with a learning disability and/or autism are safe and protected from discrimination, hate crime and abuse in communities, hospitals and other care settings.

## **NHS Funding Bill and NHS Long Term Plan**

*“For the first time, the National Health Service’s multi-year funding settlement, agreed earlier this year, will be enshrined in law. Steps will be taken to grow and support the National Health Service’s workforce and a new visa will ensure qualified doctors, nurses and health professionals have fast-track entry to the United Kingdom. Hospital car parking charges will be removed for those in greatest need.”*

### **NHS Funding Bill:**

The main elements of the legislation are:

- Early legislation will be brought forward to enshrine in law the multi-year funding settlement for the NHS, agreed earlier this year, that will see a £33.9 billion increase in cash terms by 2023-24.

### **LGA view**

- It is positive that the Government has made an explicit commitment to invest in the NHS but it does not operate in isolation. Hospitals and community health services work hand in hand with adult social care, public health and other key services such as housing and the voluntary and community sector to provide care and support for people in their homes and neighbourhoods, reducing pressure on health services. The commitment for increased funding for the NHS will only be maximised if there is an equivalent investment in social care, public health and prevention services that improve people’s health, wellbeing and independence.
- Local authorities’ public health grant funding has reduced by over £700 million in real terms between 2015/16 and 2019/20. We continue to call for the public health grant to be restored and placed on a long-term sustainable footing for the future, with the additional money used by local authorities to help avert the onset of disease and reduce the burden on NHS and Social care.

### **NHS Long Term Plan Bill**

The main elements of the legislation are:

- Draft legislation that will accelerate the Long Term Plan (LTP) for the NHS, transforming patient care and future-proofing our NHS.
- Wider reform will also be supported through transforming hospitals and investing in staff. This includes delivering 50,000 more nurses, with non-repayable maintenance payments of at least £5,000 per year for nursing, midwifery and some allied health professional students, 6,000 more doctors and 6,000 more primary care professionals in general practice.

### **LGA view**

- The LGA broadly supports the intentions of the Bill, though we recognise that, like the LTP itself, the legislation is likely to focus almost solely on measures to enable greater collaboration between NHS organisations. Making it easier for different parts of the NHS to work together is important but, in making legal changes to enable better collaboration between NHS organisations, the Government needs to avoid inadvertently creating a two-tier system which introduces more barriers to collaboration between the NHS and councils.
- The NHS operates within a complex system involving local government, voluntary and community services and private and independent providers and we need a duty to collaborate on integration that applies equally to the NHS and local government. Any new legislation should facilitate this.
- With regard to the recruitment and retention of NHS staff, it is crucial that the Government recognises that the NHS does not work in isolation and there are large number of health workers in councils and in social care providers. With 110,000 current vacancies in social care alone it is imperative that provisions to recruit and retain core health staff do not stop at the boundaries of NHS employment and that in putting in place new arrangements for immigration the same priority is given to the social care workforce as to the NHS. A truly integrated approach to care and wellbeing requires coordination across the wider workforce and parity between workers in local government and the NHS.

### **Health Service Safety Investigations Bill**

*Legislation will be taken forward to establish an independent body to investigate serious healthcare incidents.*

The main elements of the legislation are:

- To establish the Health Service Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) as a new Executive Non-Departmental Public Body, with powers and independence to conduct investigations into incidents that occur during the provision of NHS services and have, or may have, implications for the safety of patients.
- To amend the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, giving English NHS bodies the power to appoint Medical Examiners and placing a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that enough Medical Examiners are appointed in the healthcare system in England. The introduction of medical examiners is designed to strengthen safeguards by providing additional scrutiny of the medical circumstances and cause of deaths in non-coronial cases. It will also improve the quality of death certification and avoid unnecessary distress for the bereaved.

## **LGA view**

- The LGA's view is that measures to improve the clinical governance of the health service sit better with the NHS than with local authorities. We welcome the commitment to amend the 2009 Act to give responsibility to the English NHS to appoint medical examiners.
- While local authorities support measures to improve the quality and accuracy of death certification, and to avoid unnecessary distress for grieving families with unanswered questions about the cause of death, the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 currently gives responsibility to councils to appoint medical examiners.

## **Mental Health reform**

*"My ministers will continue work to reform the Mental Health Act."*

- The government will continue work to reform the Mental Health Act to ensure people get the support they need, with a much greater say in their care. A White Paper will be produced early next year.

## **LGA view**

- We support plans to reform the Mental Health Act and give people a stronger say in their treatment. Local government plays a key role supporting people detained under the Mental Health Act. Clear links should be made with the related Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act so that people can access the support and independent advocacy they need.
- Legislative reform should be accompanied by improved community mental health provision and a shift in focus to prevention and early intervention for adults, young people and children, in order to reduce the need for more intensive or acute mental health services.

## **National disability strategy**

The government has committed to transform the lives of disabled people, ensuring they have access to opportunities and are able to achieve their potential. It will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People in 2020 to ensure disabled people can lead a life of opportunity and fulfilment. The strategy, will be developed with disabled people, disability organisations and charities, and will cover housing, education and transport.

## **LGA view**

- We welcome the government's announcement of a national strategy for disabled people. Councils provide a wide range of services that support people with disability to remain independent and fully engaged in their communities – we look forward to the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

## **The Armed Forces**

*"My government will honour the Armed Forces Covenant, which will be further incorporated into law"*

The government will also introduce various measures to further support veterans and publish the UK Government's Strategy action plan due in early in 2020.

### **LGA view**

- Armed Forces serving personnel, veterans and their families are valued members of our communities which is why all councils are committed to supporting them and have signed the voluntary Armed Forces Covenant.
- Councils already work with partners to provide a range of services that help veterans and their families smoothly transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life, and to meet any additional needs arising from their service, including periods of crisis that require intensive support.
- Today's announcement will build upon that support. Additional funding is needed to replace capacity that is being lost as a result of the ending of valuable local government projects funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

### **Business rates**

*"To support business, my government will...bring forward changes to business rates."*

### **Business rate review**

The Government has announced that it is committed to conducting a fundamental review of business rates. It recognises the role of business rates as a source of local authority income and will consider input from the sector as part of the review of business rates. Further details on the review will be announced.

### **LGA view**

- Central government should work closely with councils as part of its review. As the Government recognizes, business rates have an important role in council funding as retained business rates now contribute around a quarter of local authority core spending power, with their importance increasing as part of the move to further business rates retention.
- This review should also consider the full suite of funding options available to local areas to finance local services as well as infrastructure to support growth, including consideration of new sources of funding local government, such as a tourism levy or an e-commerce levy.
- The Government needs to tackle business rates avoidance by implementing a package of measures along the lines of those to be implemented in Wales.

### **Business rate discounts**

The Government has announced it is committed to increasing the retail discount from one-third to 50 per cent, extending that discount to cinemas and music venues, extending the duration of the local newspapers discount, and introducing an additional discount for pubs.

### **LGA view**

- The newly announced retail discounts will provide support for high street businesses and pubs. It is important that in line with normal government practice, local government is fully funded for this loss of extremely important income.
- We are concerned that reliefs lower the business rates taxbase. Introduction of new reliefs is one of the issues to consider as part of the move to further business rates retention.
- More than 90 percent of existing reliefs are mandatory. If councils had more leeway to target reliefs, for example, those relating to charities and empty property, they could respond better to existing conditions and tackle business rates avoidance more effectively.

## **Business rate revaluations**

The Government will also progress legislation to bring forward the next business rates revaluation by one year from 2022 to 2021 and move business rates revaluations from a five-yearly cycle to a three-yearly cycle.

### **LGA view**

- We are pleased that the next business rates revaluation will be brought forward and that future revaluations will be more frequent, but this must be introduced alongside measures to significantly reduce the backlog of appeals.
- For example, we would like to see reforms to ensure that appeals can be received no later than six months after a new ratings list comes into force. This system applies in Scotland.
- According to the latest Valuation Tribunal statistics there are still over 50,000 unsolved appeals from the 2010 list. Councils have had to divert around £3 billion from services to deal with appeals risk. The check and challenge system for appeals means that only a small number of 2017 appeals have as yet been received. It is important that the Government makes clear its proposals for the closing date for 2017 list appeals. Previous practice is that this should be at the same time as the 2021 list comes into force.

## **Environment Bill**

*Measures will be introduced to establish a new Office for Environmental Protection, increase local powers to tackle air pollution, introduce charges for specified single use plastic items, and ban exports of polluting plastic waste to non-OECD countries.*

The main elements of this Bill are:

- Transform our environmental governance once we leave the EU by putting environmental principles into law; introducing legally binding targets; and establishing a new Office for Environmental Protection.
- Increase local powers to tackle sources of air pollution.
- Protect nature and improve biodiversity by working with developers.
- Extend producer responsibility, ensure a consistent approach to recycling,

introduce deposit return schemes, and introduce charges for specified single use plastic items.

- Secure long-term, resilient water and wastewater services, including through powers to direct water companies to work together to meet current and future demand.

### **LGA view**

- Councillors are at the forefront of leading the response to the environmental concerns of residents and businesses for a long time. We welcome the reintroduction of the Environment Bill. The LGA will be working with DEFRA on the environment principles set out in the Bill and the establishment of the Office of Environmental Protection.
- We welcome the Bill's intention to strengthen local powers in relation to air quality enforcement. Many of our powers are decades old and need to be reformed to fit with modern sources of emissions. Additional resources will support councils to deal effectively with environmental protection.
- We support the principle of increasing biodiversity net gain through the planning process. We also recognise the need to provide new housing and infrastructure. We have some concerns about the implementation of these proposals and the new costs for councils. Planning departments will need to be supported with the right skills and resources to make this work.
- Local government wants to see measures that reduce the amount of unnecessary and unrecyclable material becoming an issue in the first place. For many years, the LGA has called for retailers and manufacturers, the producers of waste, to pay for recycling and disposing of packaging in household waste. We welcome the commitment to do this. We will be working with government and the waste industry to understand the impact of the ban on exports of plastic waste to non-OECD countries and any unintended consequences for household waste and recycling services
- The LGA has supported proposals for councils to collect a core set of dry recyclable materials. Around 70 per cent of councils already collect the proposed set of materials, with the gaps being glass and plastic pots, tubs and trays. How the materials are collected should be a local decision. There are a range of local issues such as geography, property type and rurality which determine the method in which waste can be collected. Therefore, it will be more effective if councils are free to decide how to deliver their waste services at a local level.

### **Climate change**

*My government will continue to take steps to meet the world-leading target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It will continue to lead the way in tackling global climate change, hosting the COP26 Summit in 2020.*

The main elements of this Bill are:

- The first budget will prioritise the environment. Government will invest £4 billion in flood defences and invest £9.2 billion in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals

- The Future Homes Standard will be introduced by 2025, which will see new build homes future-proofed with low carbon heating and world leading standards of energy efficiency by 2025.
- The tree-planting commitment will be substantially increased and a £640 million new Nature for Climate fund will be created

### **LGA view**

- The Government's ambitions will need strong local leadership and partnerships. This is where councils can play a vital leading role as agents of change. New funding streams for green infrastructure, energy efficiency, low carbon technologies and flood defences will need joining up at the local level. Councils can maximise these funding streams. Effective delivery will need local flexibility and a single place based funding pot.
- As transport is the largest source of carbon emission in the UK, it is important that councils are given the powers and long term certainty and flexibility of funding to manage traffic demand, increase use of bus services and promote low and zero emissions transport. This includes implementing Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act, and active support for local demand management schemes, such as the workplace parking levy and devolving the Bus Services Operators Grant which is a fuel based subsidy paid to private bus operators.
- The LGA supports the ambition to reduce energy demand and lower carbon emissions from new housing and we will be responding to the consultation on the Future Homes Standard.

### **Achieving net zero emissions by 2050**

*Government will take steps to achieve the target of achieving zero carbon emissions by 2050*

### **LGA view**

- We welcome the intention to take further steps to reduce carbon emissions. The LGA and around 230 councils have declared a climate emergency and are setting out ambitious local plans to reduce carbon emissions. To join up activity between central and local government we are calling for the establishment of a climate change taskforce comprising local leaders as agents of change and government departments to determine the funding, legislation and policy changes needed to deliver zero net carbon emissions.

### **Animal welfare legislation**

The main elements of the legislation are:

- A clear statement in domestic law that animals are sentient beings, and a duty on Government to have all due regard to the welfare of sentient animals in policy formulation and implementation.
- Extending the current maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences, specified under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, from six months imprisonment to five years imprisonment.

- Measures to deliver on commitments to end excessively long journeys for slaughter and fattening, on primates as pets, cat microchipping, and on the import of trophies from hunting of endangered animals.

### **LGA view**

- The LGA welcomes the announcement of new legislation to increase maximum sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years and improve the welfare of live animals on journeys once we leave the EU. Councils will always do what they can to respond to animal health and welfare concerns, to actively promote animal health and take forward prosecutions. However, they need proper resources to ensure a consistent, long-term approach to animal health and welfare.

### **Renters' Reform Bill**

*“New measures will be brought forward to protect tenants...”*

- Abolishing the use of ‘no fault’ evictions by removing section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and reforming the grounds for possession.
- Giving landlords more rights to gain possession of their property through the courts where there is a legitimate need for them to do so by reforming current legislation. In addition to this we will also work to improve the court process for landlords to make it quicker and easier for them to get their property back sooner.
- Introducing a new lifetime deposit so that tenants don’t need to save for a new deposit every time they move house.
- Alongside these, we will continue to develop and implement measures to wider access to and expand the scope of the database of rogue landlords and property agents. Giving greater powers to drive improvements in standards, and empowering tenants to make an informed choice about who they rent from.

### **LGA View**

- Councils are determined to tackle the homelessness crisis, which represents many thousands of individual tragedies and a national emergency
- No fault evictions have been the major cause of homelessness and abolishing their use will be an important step. A thriving private rented sector helps to bring about a balanced mix of affordable housing in communities. We look forward to seeing the detail of the Bill. Providing greater flexibility for councils to implement landlord licensing schemes will be an important part of the solution to driving improvements in standards.
- It is also key that we build homes of all tenures to provide people with opportunities to live in a safe and secure home. Local government has an important role to play in achieving this ambition both as leaders of place through the planning system and as builders in their own right.

### **Housing supply**

*My government will take steps to support home ownership, including by making*

*homes available at a discount for local first-time buyers.*

- The Government will support people to realise the dream of homeownership. One of the biggest divides in our country is between those who can afford their own home and those who cannot.
- The Government will shortly launch a consultation on First Homes. This will provide homes for local people and key workers at a discount of at least 30 per cent - saving them tens of thousands of pounds.
- The discount on First Homes will be secured through a covenant. This means these homes will remain discounted in perpetuity, supporting people now and in the future who aspire to own a home of their own.
- The Government will also renew the Affordable Homes Programme, building hundreds of thousands of new homes for a range of people in different places. This will help us prevent people from falling into homelessness while also supporting further people into homeownership.
- We will introduce a new, reformed Shared Ownership model, making buying a share of a home fairer and more transparent. This new model will be simpler to understand and better able shared owners to buy more of their property and eventually reach full ownership.

#### **LGA view**

- Councils support the ambition of the many individuals and families that want to own their own home. Councils have a key role in ensuring that housing provision meets the needs of local communities, including the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services to support healthy communities.
- It is important that councils are able to determine the right tenure mix to meet these needs; this means homes for sale and rent at market and appropriately subsidised levels, included homes at social rent.
- Councils want to encourage home ownership, but this must not be at the expense of social housing and other affordable housing products that meet local needs.

#### **Planning**

- To deliver on the homes this country needs, the Government is committed to building at least a million more homes over this Parliament. In the coming months we will set out further steps to achieve this, including an ambitious Planning White Paper and funding for critical infrastructure.
- The Planning White Paper will make the planning process clearer, more accessible and more certain for all users, including homeowners and small businesses. It will also address resourcing and performance in Planning Departments.
- The new £10 billion Single Housing Infrastructure fund will provide the roads, schools and GP surgeries needed to support new homes. Alongside First Homes, this will ensure local people truly benefit from house building in their area and build support for new developments.

#### **LGA view**

- We welcome the introduction of the £10 billion Single Housing Infrastructure fund. The LGA strongly advocates a local plan-led system that takes into account the needs and expectations of existing and new communities. This is the best way to secure community buy-in, good quality housing growth and the infrastructure needed to support new development.
- There are opportunities to further streamline the local plan process and make it quicker and easier to get local plans in place, alongside providing greater certainty to councils, developers and communities.
- We seek talks with Government on how to ensure that the use of presumption in favour of sustainable development, where councils are unable to demonstrate a five year land supply and/or where councils do not meet the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test, risk undermining Local Plans and the public's trust in the planning system.

### **Social Housing white paper**

- For those in the social rented sector, we will bring forward a Social Housing White Paper which will set out further measures to empower tenants and support the continued supply of social homes. This will include measures to provide greater redress, better regulation and improve the quality of social housing.

### **LGA view**

- Councils are proud of the homes they provide for many families. They are committed to improving standards, to empowering and supporting tenants, and to expanding the stock of social housing for those in need of a secure, quality, affordable home. We look forward to the publication of the Social Housing White Paper.

### **Homelessness and rough sleeping**

- This Government has committed to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament. The Government will continue to invest in key rough sleeping interventions, building on the progress that we made last year in reducing rough sleeping numbers. The Government will also continue to support those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping through the continued enforcement of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

### **LGA view**

- Councils are determined to tackle the homelessness crisis which represents many thousands of individual tragedies and a national emergency. Councils are determined to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place and support those affected. The new government can help to address this by adapting welfare reforms to protect families at risk of becoming homeless, by restoring Local Housing Allowance rates to cover at least the lowest third of market rents when the current freeze ends in 2020. It should also reform the Right to Buy scheme to give councils the additional flexibilities and funding to build desperately needed affordable homes.

## Education

*To ensure every child has access to a high-quality education my ministers will increase levels of funding per pupil in every school.*

The Government has announced:

- The Government is giving schools a multi-billion pound boost, investing a total of £14 billion more over three years, on top of £4.5 billion for teacher's pensions. Overall, that translates to £150 million a week. The core schools budget will be £7.1 billion higher in 2022-23 compared to this year.
- Every school will have more money for every child and we will level up minimum per-pupil funding for secondary schools to £5,000, and primary schools to £3,750 next year, and £4,000 the year after.
- From next year, we will legally require all local authorities to deliver the minimum per-pupil funding in their local area. And that will be an important first step towards delivering this funding directly to schools, through a single national formula, so that it is fair and equitable for every school in the country.

## LGA view

- The LGA welcomes the Government's announcement to increase schools budgets by £7.1 billion by 2022/23, and an additional £780 million for council high needs budgets to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for 2020/21.
- We are pleased that the LGA's call for more money to be made available to support children with SEND has been recognised and in the longer term we are keen to work with the Government to tackle the high needs funding gap as demand for support continues to increase. We want to see all schools become more inclusive so that more children with high needs can be appropriately supported in mainstream schools.
- Local flexibility allowed under the existing 'soft' National Funding Formula plays an essential role in allowing councils to work with schools locally make sure that available funding addresses local needs and priorities. This flexibility should remain.
- Councils have a strong track record in school improvement, with 89 per cent of council maintained schools now good or outstanding. Councils stand ready to work with the Government and partners to support any failing school in their area. For this to happen we believe that the strong track record of councils in school improvement must be recognised, maintained schools should be able to sponsor failing academies without having to become academies themselves and high-performing councils should be allowed to create MATs to support failing schools.
- It is disappointing that the Queen's Speech did not mention legislation to support councils in helping to make sure home-educated children receive a high quality education. In a minority of cases where home-schooled children are not receiving a suitable education or being educated in a safe environment, councils need the powers and appropriate funding to enter homes or other premises to speak to children and check their schooling.

## **Cost of living, childcare, and the National Living Wage.**

The government will bring forward measures to support working families, including:

- The Government will establish a new £1 billion fund to help create more high quality, affordable childcare, including before and after school and during the holidays.
- The funding will go to schools and childcare providers to open up more options to families. Our ambition is for 250,000 more primary school children to get onsite childcare over the summer holidays.
- The Chancellor has pledged that the National Living Wage will increase, reaching two-thirds of median earnings within five years (projected to be around £10.50 an hour in 2024), provided economic conditions allow.
- The Government plans to expand the reach of the National Living Wage which currently applies to people over the ages of 25, to those aged 21 and over within five years.

### **LGA view:**

- We welcome the Government's announcement of an extra £1 billion funding to develop more high quality, affordable childcare options, which will provide valuable support to working families.
- However, funding for existing childcare entitlements is insufficient, and as a result there is growing concern about the quality of provision and access for disadvantaged children and those with SEND. In addition, recruitment and retention of suitably qualified childcare practitioners is increasingly difficult, largely driven by low wages and poor career progression.
- The government will need to ensure that alongside this funding to expand provision, existing provision is adequately funded, and measures are put in place to recruit and train an appropriately skilled workforce.
- The increase in the National Living Wage is welcome but will have significant implications for the cost of local public services, which will need to be fully funded by the Government.

## **National Skills Fund and Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill**

*The Government will invest an additional £3 billion over the course of this Parliament to support the creation of a 'National Skills Fund'.*

*A modern, fair, points-based immigration system will welcome skilled workers from across the world to contribute to the United Kingdom's economy, communities and public services [Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill].*

The main elements of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill are:

- Ending the free movement of EU citizens under UK law.

- The power to align the treatment of EU citizens with non-EU citizens from 2021.
- The power to make changes to the current rules for access to benefits and social security co-ordination

### **LGA view:**

- There are already significant geographical skills challenges including shortages of higher-skilled technical and vocational workers which hamper economic growth and are holding our country back. We must do more to provide people with the skills to take up these jobs. Our exit from the EU, digitalisation, the gig economy, and extended working lives will further transform the economy, bringing different opportunities and challenges to specific sectors such as construction and social care, which will vary across the country.
- To address this, we need a reformed and devolved skills and employment system to better match skills supply with employer demand. New programmes such as the National Skills Fund and recent initiatives such as the National Retraining Scheme, the Apprenticeship Levy, and the introduction of technical levels seek to address these challenges. The Government will need new policy levers to ensure these different initiatives focus and join up at the front line of delivery in local places. Councils are the natural partners of Government to join up support so we can make the best of the current system.
- We stand ready to support the Government to deliver a more place based approach to skills planning. This could establish a local skills and job offer that aims to close local skills gaps, help businesses get the correct skills and re-engage communities. The LGA's Work Local proposals offer a ready solution to deliver this in a way that would be nationally and locally accountable. It would enable local partners to work with central government to design a more efficient offer which is customised to local need. It would bring together reformed careers advice and guidance, employment, skills, apprenticeships and business support for young people, adults and employers. We estimate that, in a medium-sized Combined Authority a Work Local model could lead to an additional 8,500 people leaving benefits, an additional 6,000 people improving their skills and additional fiscal benefits for a local area of £280 million per year, with a benefit to the economy of £420 million.
- Our public and private sectors in England and Wales rely heavily on EU nationals to provide our vital services. Public services need stability at this time and councils can help to assess demand for skills locally to ensure any new immigration system takes account of the varied needs of employers in different parts of the country. The LGA and councils are working with their communities and the Home Office to ensure that residents and workers are able to apply for settlement within deadlines. But we need greater clarity sought for both councils' roles in supporting vulnerable adults and those that may lose access to benefits but still be entitled to council support in any future social security scheme.

### **Employment Bill**

*The Government will bring forward measures to encourage flexible working, to introduce the entitlement to leave for unpaid carers.*

- Protect and enhance workers' rights as the UK leaves the EU, making Britain the best place in the world to work.
- Promote fairness in the workplace, striking the right balance between the flexibility that the economy needs and the security that workers deserve.
- Strengthen workers' ability to get redress for poor treatment by creating a new, single enforcement body.
- Offer greater protections for workers by prioritising fairness in the workplace, and introducing better support for working families.
- Build on existing employment law with measures that protect those in low-paid work and the gig economy.
- Allowing parents to take extended leave for neonatal care; and introducing an entitlement to one weeks leave for unpaid carers.

#### **LGA view**

- Flexible working is offered by councils and is an important way of supporting people in their work whilst improving recruitment and productivity. We look forward to working with the Government to provide the detailed analysis and intelligence from councils in their role as employers, to help ensure the legislation works in practice.
- Councils support the creation of a single enforcement body for certain rights, provided it is properly resourced and consistent and proportionate in its approach.
- We greatly value and appreciate the contribution made by unpaid carers across the UK. Whether paid or unpaid, caring is a stressful role and those undertaking this vital role need the opportunity for respite. Introducing an entitlement to leave will place an additional cost on the social care sector and we look forward to working with government to agree how this goal can be achieved.

#### **Building and fire safety measures**

*"New measures will be brought forward...to improve building safety."*

#### **Building Safety Bill**

The main elements of the legislation are:

- An enhanced safety framework for high-rise residential buildings, taking forward the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building safety, and in some areas going further by:
  - Providing clearer accountability and stronger duties for those responsible for the safety of high-rise buildings throughout the building's design, construction and occupation, with clear competence requirements to maintain high standards.

- Giving residents a stronger voice in the system, ensuring their concerns are never ignored and they fully understand how they can contribute to maintaining safety in their buildings.
  - Strengthening enforcement and sanctions to deter non-compliance with the new regime, hold the right people to account when mistakes are made and ensure they are not repeated.
  - Developing a new stronger and clearer framework to provide national oversight of construction products, to ensure all products meet high performance standards.
  - Developing a new system to oversee the whole built environment, with local enforcement agencies and national regulators working together to ensure that the safety of all buildings is improved.
- We will also legislate to require that developers of new build homes must belong to a New Homes Ombudsman.

#### **LGA view:**

- Residents deserve to be safe - and feel safe - in their homes and reform of our failed building safety system is urgent. The inclusion in the Queen's Speech of a commitment to bring forward legislation to implement new building safety standards as the LGA has called for is therefore welcome.
- However, in designing the new regulatory framework, we must avoid creating a two-tier building safety system. A close partnership between the new building regulator, councils and the fire service will be essential in ensuring we can build safe communities, towns and cities. At the core of this new partnership must be tougher enforcement powers for councils and the fire service, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Government to deliver them.
- The repair bill for existing buildings is likely to run into the billions of pounds and leaseholders and council taxpayers will not be able to meet the costs. There is a significant shortage of the skills required to deliver effective fire safety regulation and funding training will be an essential early step in reform. Government needs to work closely with local authorities to address these challenges.

#### **Fire Safety Bill**

The main elements of the legislation are:

- Clarifying that the scope of the Fire Safety Order includes the external walls of the building, including cladding, and fire doors for domestic premises of multiple occupancy.
- Strengthening the relevant enforcement powers to hold building owners and managers to account.
- Providing a transitional period for building owners and managers (the "responsible person") and Fire and Rescue Services to put in place the infrastructure for these changes.

#### **LGA view:**

- The Grenfell Tower fire led to an understanding of gaps in the extent of the Fire Safety Order and the ability of fire and rescue services and councils to use existing legislation to tackle combustible cladding. It is welcome that

this legislation will confirm the extent of the Fire Safety Order and that it applies to cladding and fire doors to flats.

- As councils work to identify what cladding systems are in place on all high-rise residential buildings, this Bill is an opportunity to place a clear duty on building owners and managers to tell councils and fire and rescue services what materials have been used in these systems. However the costs of replacing any combustible cladding should not fall on leaseholders or council taxpayers, and neither should the cost of replacing faulty fire doors in social housing fall on tenants. Any reforms need to take account of the fact that fire and rescue services do not currently have the capacity to inspect the thousands of high-rise residential buildings.
- The Government also should look at the case for introducing sprinklers at a lower height threshold in newly built premises and in premises where vulnerable people sleep. There also needs to be consideration of additional Government funding for the retro-fitting of sprinklers in high risk buildings.

## **Domestic Abuse Bill**

*My government will ensure...that the courts work better for all those who engage with them, including victims of domestic abuse.*

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Creating a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical or sexual violence, but can also involve emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse.
- Establishing in law the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to: stand up for victims and survivors; raise public awareness; monitor the response of local authorities, the justice system and other statutory agencies; and hold them to account in tackling domestic abuse.
- Providing for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order - placing restrictions and other requirements on perpetrators in order to better protect victims.
- Placing a duty on tier one local authorities in England (County Councils, Metropolitan and Unitary Authorities, the Greater London Authority) to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation.
- Creating a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal courts (for example, to enable them to give evidence via a video link).

## **LGA view:**

- Addressing all forms of domestic abuse is a high priority for councils and we support the Bill's objectives of ensuring that people feel able to report abuse and are confident that organisations will do everything possible to support them and their families and pursue their abusers.

- Providing a clear definition in law of domestic abuse will provide clarity for councils and other agencies in undertaking their work, as well as underpinning the remainder of the Bill. It will be important that this definition encompasses the different forms that domestic abuse can take.
- Establishing the appointment of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner in law will help to raise the profile of domestic abuse and ensure momentum in strengthening organisations' approach to it, as has been seen with the appointment of a Modern Slavery Commissioner. Councils will work collaboratively with the new Commissioner to support the objectives of the Bill and help to embed good practice across the country.
- There needs to be a greater focus on prevention and early intervention measures to tackle the root causes of domestic abuse and support more victims. This should include funding and investment for evidence-based perpetrator programmes and for key learning and best practice from Domestic Homicide Reviews to be shared on a national level.

### **Serious Violence Bill**

*New laws will require schools, police, councils and health authorities to work together to prevent serious crime.*

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Placing duties on relevant public agencies and bodies to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence.
- Providing sufficient flexibility so that the relevant organisations will engage and work together in the most effective local partnership for any given area, whether that be a Community Safety Partnership or other multi-agency partnership such as local safeguarding arrangements. Statutory guidance will also be published that will set out the likely implications on a sector-by-sector basis.
- Amending section 6(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which sets out the strategies Community Safety Partnerships must formulate and implement, to explicitly include serious violence.
- New court orders to target known knife carriers, to make it easier for the police to stop and search those convicted for knife crime offences. The power will apply only to those convicted of a knife related offence.

### **LGA view**

- We support a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, which is an increasing priority for councils.
- Early intervention and prevention needs to be central to this work, as opposed to relying solely on a criminal justice strategy. This requires the input of a range of partners, including those in the health and education sectors.
- As part of this preventative and diversionary work, reducing re-offending is also important to deliver safer and stronger communities. Councils are ideally placed to help tackle serious violence in our communities, but the funding cuts to local youth services, youth offending teams and councils'

public health budgets need to be reversed.

- If there are going to be additional duties placed on local authorities to tackle serious violent crime, then it is vital these new duties are adequately funded.
- When new court orders are introduced to target known knife carriers, it will be essential to ensure these new orders effectively tackle knife crime and carefully consider the implications for different communities.
- Any new costs to local government associated with these new orders will need to be fully funded and sustained. Without additional resources, any new responsibilities placed on youth offending teams (YOTs) to monitor compliance with these orders will reduce capacity for the vital work that these organisations do to prevent young people from becoming involved in criminal activity in the first place.

### **Police Powers and Protections Bill**

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Introducing a statutory requirement for the Home Office to report annually on progress made against the Police Covenant.
- Measures to allow special constables (fully warranted volunteer police officers) to join the Police Federation so that they can benefit from the additional protection and support afforded to members.
- Introducing a new test to assess the standard of driving of a police officer, so that their skills and training can be taken into account should there be any subsequent investigations into their actions.
- Potential measures to criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment in England and Wales, and the introduction of new police powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised encampments.

### **LGA view**

- Police officers, police staff and their families are valued members of our communities and the LGA will seek to be involved in the development of the Police Covenant to ensure the views of local authorities are taken into consideration.
- Councils are committed to ensuring that their local communities are safe, inclusive and welcoming. They also know that the vast majority of travellers are law-abiding citizens and often contribute much to the communities they stay in. However, when encampments are clearly breaching the law and causing concern and inconvenience to communities, local authorities have a duty to take action to ensure the law is upheld, which they do working alongside the police and the court system.
- We therefore welcome measures in the Police Powers and Protections Bill that will help to strengthen police powers when dealing with unauthorised encampments. It will be important for these measures to be matched with

practical and financial support for local authorities, particularly to help with the availability of transit sites and other issues of concern, such as clean-up costs which can occur following an unauthorised encampment.

### **Victims law reform**

The Government will consult next year on a Victims' Law that guarantees victims' rights and the level of support they can expect. A revised Victims' Code to be published in early 2020 will set out the minimum level of service victims can expect from criminal justice agencies.

The main elements of this reform are:

- The continued development of a Victims' Law.
- A consultation on strengthening the Victims' Code and exploring enhanced powers for the Victims' Commissioner so that they can better hold the Government to account.
- Exploring how to strengthen the support offered to survivors of terrorism and their families.

### **LGA view:**

- It is right that there should be clarity about victims' rights and the level of support they can expect, and that support for victims of terrorism and their families should be strengthened.
- However, it is also important that a revised Victims' Code continues to reflect the breadth of different offences (including a range of different regulatory issues) that fall within the scope of the criminal justice system and take an appropriate, proportionate approach to them.

### **Online harms**

*"My ministers will develop legislation to improve internet safety for all."*

The Government will introduce a new duty of care on companies towards their users, with an independent regulator to oversee this framework.

### **LGA view**

- The LGA supports the need to address online abuse and exploitation through the creation of duty of care on online platforms supported by an independent regulator.
- Councils have statutory responsibility for the safeguarding, protection and wellbeing of children and strongly support the focus on children. The internet has created a huge medium for the exploitation and abuse of children on an international scale, and this must be tackled on a local to national to international level.
- Councils work hard to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, and to prevent suicide. The internet has created a new space which is harder to monitor for abuse and bullying.

Social media has provided a platform for the sharing of harmful images and information affecting self-esteem, self-image and mental health.

- We are pleased that the Government intends to review the Gambling Act. The LGA has previously highlighted concerns about the changing nature of gambling since the Act was introduced and the local impacts of gambling related harm
- Councils have a key role to protect their residents from radicalisation, terrorism and crime. The internet has created a huge platform for these threats. Social media has also made individuals more traceable and accessible, raising safety issues for those fleeing from domestic abuse.
- Councillors are experiencing online intimidation, abuse and threats against them, which in turn is putting prospective councillors and candidates off from standing. This is undermining the integrity of our democracy. The spread of misinformation on the internet includes stories around councils and council services. This can lead to mistrust in our public services. So tackling abuse and intimidation online is a high priority for councillors themselves.

## **Infrastructure**

*The National Infrastructure Strategy will be published alongside the first Budget, and will set out further details of the Government's plan to invest £100 billion to transform the UK's infrastructure.*

### **LGA view**

- The Government's national infrastructure strategy needs to implement the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission. Specifically, that councils should have 'stable, devolved infrastructure budgets, as Highways England and Network Rail have', which would mean providing councils with a funding allocation in advance for five years. This is the most effective way for us to deliver transport infrastructure improvements quickly in a way that complements local growth strategies. It should also devolve the management of the broadband roll out programme to local areas enabling councils to use their experience and local knowledge to hold broadband providers to account and secure greater value for money for local residents.

## **Rail Reform**

*The Government will publish a White Paper informed by the recommendations [of the William's Review] next year*

### **LGA view**

- The LGA believes strongly that there are areas of the country that would benefit from further rail devolution. Many local authorities have an appetite to take more of a role in rail. There is also evidence that devolution, especially for suburban rail, can bring strong benefits for passengers.
- The LGA welcomed indications from the previous Government that there may be a greater role for local government in rail and we await the detailed proposals with interest. The LGA has offered to develop the details with the Department for Transport.

## **Broadband**

*New laws will accelerate the delivery of gigabit capable broadband.*

### **LGA view**

- Access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is a necessity for all communities, something they have rightfully come to expect and essential to keeping pace with developments across the globe.
- The Government's commitment to amend legislation so that all new build homes are required to have the infrastructure to support gigabit-capable connections is positive and recognises the LGA's call to place a statutory requirement on developers to ensure no home goes unconnected. We are pleased the Government has listened to councils and await further details including the level at which the cost cap per premise will be set.
- The Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill which will create a cheaper and faster 'light-touch' tribunal process for telecoms companies to obtain interim code rights (or access rights) for a period of up to 18 months, is an important piece of enabling legislation and the LGA looks forward to working with Government to develop the detail of how this process might work in practice.
- For many a decent mobile connection is vital. The LGA has welcomed the Shared Rural Network (SRN) as a positive step forward. However, the mobile network operators must be held to account on their coverage. Independent analysis of coverage has revealed patchy access, high dropped call rates and not-spots in areas where coverage data provided by Ofcom and mobile operators reports excellent signal. The coverage used to judge the success of the SRN should match consumer experience on the ground. Otherwise the public subsidy to these proposals will not achieve value for money and deliver for communities desperate for better mobile coverage.

## **Boycotts by public institutions**

The Government has committed to stopping public institutions from imposing their own approach or views about international relations. They will do this by preventing boycotts, divestment or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries and those who trade with them.

The main elements are:

- Stopping public institutions from taking a different approach to UK Government sanctions and foreign relations. This will be in the form of preventing public institutions carrying out independent boycotts and sanctions against (i) foreign countries, or those linked to them, (ii) the sale of goods and services from foreign countries, and (iii) UK firms which trade with such countries, where such an approach is not in line with UK Government sanctions.
- It will apply to institutions across the public sector, not just councils, where there have been issues of bodies using public resource to carry out boycotts, pursuing their own agenda beyond UK sanctions.

- The measures will cover purchasing, procurement and investment decisions which undermine cohesion and integration.
- The UK Government will publish further details on the extent and application of the policy in due course.

### **LGA View**

- Councils seek to promote democratic values in the way they use taxpayers' money and this will sometimes include taking ethical considerations, or the promotion of their local economy, into account where due process allows this.

### **Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill**

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Ensuring that financial assistance given to the Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee continues to comply with spending rules set out by the Treasury.
- Creating a criminal offence for the unauthorised sale of Games tickets.
- Restricting unauthorised advertising and trading in and around Games locations.
- Creating a civil offence for unauthorised association with the Games.
- Setting a statutory basis for the Games Transport Plan, creating bespoke traffic regulatory powers for Games purposes and providing a safeguard power for the Secretary of State.
- Ensuring that the Organising Committee provides regular updates on its progress towards delivery of the Games

### **LGA view:**

- The Birmingham Commonwealth Games offer a tremendous opportunity to celebrate our athletes and inspire a new generation to become more active. Government will want to ensure that all parts of the country have facilities and activities in place for people to turn their enthusiasm into activity, build new active habits to keep them healthy, and develop into the medal winners of the future.