

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Board

SIG Name: Unitary Councils' Network

Lead Member: Cllr Paul Bettison OBE – Leader of Bracknell Forest Council

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Membership

Bath & North East Somerset, Bedford Borough, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, Bracknell Forest, Cheshire East, Cornwall, Hartlepool Borough, Medway, North Lincolnshire, North Somerset, Plymouth City, Portsmouth City, Reading Borough, Rutland County, Shropshire, Slough Borough, Southampton City, South Gloucestershire, Stoke On Trent, Swindon Borough, Telford & Wrekin, Thurrock, Torbay, West Berkshire, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough.

Aim

To promote, support and represent the aims and ambitions of the Unitary Councils of England.

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

Meetings have recently moved to fortnightly (virtually). The chairman of the network, in common with other network chairmen, attends regular virtual briefings given by MHCLG Ministers and the Secretary of State and also attends virtual meetings with the Chairman and senior officers of the LGA, and the Local Outbreak Plan Advisory Board and then cascades information to UCN member authorities.

Membership has grown from 19 to 26. New Members: Bedford, Cornwall, Hartlepool, Reading, Shropshire, Southampton, Stoke On Trent, Thurrock.

Guest speakers have attended at the request of the membership and have included:

- Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE – Chief Executive of Oldham and Accountable Officer NHS Oldham, Contract Tracing Lead at NHS Test and Trace.
- David Simmonds CBE MP
- Cllr James Jamieson – Chairman, LGA
- Mark Andrews – Strategic Director for People & Deputy Chief Executive, Rutland.

- Cllr Kevin Bentley – Deputy Leader of Essex CC and Chair of the LGA Brexit Taskforce
- Mark Lloyd – Chief Executive, LGA
- Andrew Lewer MBE MP – Chair of the APPG for Devolution
- Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP – Chair of the Education Select Committee

Key topics discussed:

- Brexit
- The pandemic
- Devolution
- Planning
- Education – post-pandemic
- Funding

Paul Bettison