

Local government first

Local
Government
Association

No.661 July 2021
www.local.gov.uk



15 **Civility in public life**
Practical advice on
how to handle abuse
on social media

16 **New councillor hub**
Helping you navigate
the first few months as a
newly elected member

20 **Youth participation**
No young person
should be left behind
on jobs and training

25 **Responding to falls**
Joining up rural health
and care services to
support older residents

Rentplus is seeking new Local Authority Partners.



Is your Authority a forward thinking, innovative council, but not offering Rentplus? Why not? We offer a way for Local Authorities to increase the choice of affordable housing on new developments, and reduce waiting lists without drawing on their budgets or government funding.

How it works?

Rentplus is a fully National Planning Policy Framework compliant model, delivering affordable housing for rent and other affordable routes to home ownership.

We buy new, attractive, affordable homes from developers under Section 106 and let these on 20-year full repairing leases to trusted RP partners who manage them on our behalf.

Successful applicants move in and pay an affordable rent for between five and 20 years. This gives them time and more disposable income to save towards a deposit, and rebuild their credit history. At the end of the tenancy they buy 100% of their home at the market value: and Rentplus gifts them 10% of the value to boost their deposit.

North East: 0113 466 0074

North West: 0161 806 1175

Midlands: 0190 888 8472

East of England: 0122 385 5432

South West: 0139 253 5886

South East: 0148 361 0030

The benefits to your local council

- 1 Local Authorities can offer a greater choice of genuinely affordable, attractive housing to local people without drawing on tight budgets or raising expensive funds.
- 2 We are fully NPPF-compliant under (a) Affordable housing for rent as well as (d) Other affordable routes to home ownership.
- 3 Rentplus homes are high quality 'ready to move in' homes, designed and built to the highest quality and specification, with a full NHBC 10 year warranty.
- 4 Rentplus helps reduce local housing waiting lists - up to 50% of our residents move out of social housing, releasing the units for reallocation. And the majority of our residents are NHS/Key and Essential workers.

Rentplus

We work closely with Local Authorities to deliver affordable homes to aspirant working homeowners on local housing lists, unable to get onto the property ladder. We have funding ready to be deployed in your area giving you more affordable homes which complement other form of affordable tenure, with less Government grant.

We have secured substantial funds to invest in social housing without the need for grant or subsidy!

E: info@rentplus-uk.com **W:** www.rentplus-uk.com



@RentplusUK



@Rentplus_UK



CONTENTS



To conference...

The LGA's virtual annual conference kicks off next week with a host of speakers, including Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick, Shadow Communities Secretary Steve Reed, Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Ed Davey MP, and Baroness Lane-Fox (p10).

It's our annual opportunity to meet up and discuss the key issues facing local government, including the pandemic, economic recovery, climate change, council housebuilding, public health, supporting children and young people, funding, mental health, building safety, planning reform, equalities, and devolution.

I urge you to sign up for your free place at www.local.gov.uk/conference.

Elsewhere in this month's **first**, we hear from outgoing LGA President Lord Kerslake (p11), take a look at our greenhouse gas accounting tool (p14), and discuss civility in public life in the face of online abuse (p15).

We have features on our new councillor hub, which is packed with useful information for first-time elected members (p16), and on the support available from the LGA's Be a Councillor programme to help increase the diversity of those standing at local elections (p19).

We have also launched our local employment and skills recovery learning hub, which provides resources and case studies to support your work on local economic recovery (p21).

Cllr James Jamieson
is LGA Chairman

FEATURES

- 10 Back local**
LGA conference: level up with local leadership
- 11 A rollercoaster ride**
Six tumultuous years as LGA president
- 12 A virtual delight**
The LGA's annual conference goes online
- 14 Greenhouse gases**
A tool for accounting for emissions
- 15 Civility in public life**
Resources for councillors facing online abuse
- 16 New councillor hub**
Help with getting to grips with your role
- 19 Be a councillor**
Election candidates – improving diversity
- 20 Education to work**
Helping young people into jobs and training
- 21 Employment and skills**
A support hub for work on economic recovery
- 22 Digital leadership**
Creating the conditions for digital transformation



19

COMMENT

- 25 Forward thinking**
Joint working on a rural falls response service
- 28 Building wellbeing**
Commissioning and procuring social value
- 28 Council finances**
Ensuring an effective audit system
- 29 Village people**
An army of community support and resilience
- 30 Drawing the line**
Boundary Commission talks communities
- 30 Parental conflict**
Early intervention is key to helping families

REGULARS

- 04 News**
- 09 Parliament – priority bills**
- 26 Chairman and group leaders**
- 31 Local elections**



31



25



20



Editor Karen Thornton
Design & print CPL www.cpl.co.uk
Advertising andy.shields@cpl.co.uk

Write to **first**: Local Government Association
18 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

Email karen.thornton@local.gov.uk
Tel editorial 07464 652610
Tel advertising 01223 378 005

Circulation 17,900 (June 2021)
first is published online at
www.local.gov.uk/first at least two days
before the magazine. To unsubscribe
email first@oscar-research.co.uk

Photography
Getty Images and iStock.com

The inclusion of an advert
or insert in **first** does not imply
endorsement by the LGA of
any product, event or service.
Contributors' views are their
own and do not necessarily
reflect the opinions or policies
of the LGA.

Local
Government
Association

Staff at residential homes ‘must have jab’

People working in care homes in England will need to have had both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine by October unless they have a medical exemption, under new laws to protect residents.

The new legislation – subject to parliamentary approval and a subsequent 16-week grace period – will apply to homes for older adults requiring nursing or

personal care registered by the Care Quality Commission. The LGA said councils are already working very closely with local health and care partners to remove existing barriers to vaccine take-up, and that it was pleased the Government has listened to feedback by launching a further consultation on extending mandatory vaccinations to other health and care settings.



Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Any targeting of mandatory vaccination should be proportionate and appropriate to specific areas where take-up rates remain lower.

"It is only right that care workers are treated the same as their NHS counterparts... as any suggestion of being singled out could have adverse consequences for recruitment and retention of the care workforce."

The recruitment and retention challenges facing social care have been highlighted in a recent report from the Commons' Health and Social Care Committee.

It found workforce burnout across the NHS and care sector has reached an emergency level and poses a risk to the future functioning of both services, with staff shortages identified as the biggest driver.

The committee reiterated the LGA's own calls for long-term reform of adult social care (see p5, p26), including for a people plan equivalent to that for the NHS. It said reducing the turnover rate in the adult social care workforce will also require long-term funding certainty.

Separately, a Public Accounts Committee report on the adult social care market has called for a comprehensive, cross-government reform plan for care, and a national care workforce strategy.

Cllr Fothergill added: "Social care deserves parity of esteem with the NHS, and action is urgently needed for the care workforce, including on pay, conditions, professionalisation, skills and training."

£160 million for low-income families

A further £160 million will be made available to families in England until the end of September, in the final extension of the Government's Covid Local Support Grant.

The grant, introduced in December 2020, provides extra support with food, key utility bills and other essentials.

Cllr Sharon Taylor, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "This latest continuation of funding will help councils to provide much-

needed support to low-income households at risk of poverty and financial hardship, including being able to provide further targeted help to families entitled to free school meals during the summer holiday period.

"Councils can now plan ahead into the early autumn."

She added: "As we move into recovery, councils would like to be able to place greater emphasis on promoting resilience and developing opportunities for their

more deprived households.

"To ensure that we are able to best address the underlying drivers of disadvantage and break cycles of poverty in the longer term, there is a need for sustainable, preventative financial advice and support that will strengthen households' capability and wellbeing, and prevent crises from recurring.

"This is why the LGA is working with government and partners to identify how best to enable councils to provide more long-term, integrated, preventative support to low-income households in the forthcoming Spending Review."



Councillors call for social care reform

More than nine in 10 councillors from across the country and political spectrum have called on government to give greater priority to social care and start committing more resources to it now.

Councillors also overwhelmingly (95 per cent) recognised the important role of councils in supporting and working alongside local communities to ensure people have the support they need to live good lives, according to a Survation poll of more than 600 for Social Care Future, supported by the LGA.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Social care has been on the frontline throughout the pandemic and there has never been a more crucial time to find a long-term solution to how we support all those who draw upon and work in these vital services."

"As this survey proves, local councillors of all political colours are overwhelmingly in favour

of social care being a major priority for the Government, along with the funding needed to not just get through the pandemic, but to build back better from it.

"As Social Care Future states, we all want to live in the place we call home, be with the people and things that we love, in communities where we care about and support each other, doing the things that matter to us."

"This is the role of social care and 94 per cent of councillors agree with this vision."

The LGA co-signed a letter to ministers last month, stressing the importance and urgency of adult social care reform.

In addition to a timetable for reform, the letter calls for an immediate injection of funding to provide short-term stability, a new deal for the care workforce, action on equalities and levelling up, and an innovation fund to help councils harness the potential of technology.

● See p26 and www.local.gov.uk/adult-social-care-reform-our-letter-government



Adult social services' 'deluge' of requests

Adult social services are facing a 'deluge' of requests for care and support from older people and disabled people of working age as society opens up after COVID-19, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) has warned.

It said people will have to wait longer for less care and support unless the Government steps in with more funding and launches its long-awaited social care reforms.

In ADASS's survey of councils responsible for social services, seven in 10 directors said they are dealing with growing demand for help with mental health issues, while nearly six in 10 say more people with care and support needs are seeking help to escape domestic violence or other abuse. More than a third report rising numbers of rough sleepers needing support.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Social care and its 1.6 million-strong workforce have risen to the unprecedented challenges caused by coronavirus, doing all they can to help keep those who draw upon these services safe and well."

"As this survey highlights, our recovery from the pandemic must include not only short-term help to deal with the immediate and rising demand for social care services, but also secure the long-term future of how we provide and pay for care and support."

"People of all ages who draw upon and work in social care need to have certainty for the future, and we call on government to bring forward its proposals, including a timetable for reform, as soon as possible, and before the summer parliamentary recess."



Framework for integrated care published

The NHS has set out how it will ask NHS leaders and partner organisations, including councils, to operate in integrated care systems from April 2022.

All parts of England are now covered by one of 45 integrated care systems (ICSs) – partnerships that bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services with local authorities and other local partners to collectively plan and integrate health and care services to meet the needs of their area's population.

Subject to legislation, ICSs will be put on a statutory footing from 2022. The recently published 'Integrated Care Systems: design framework' is intended to support their progression and development, and sets out the main ways NHS leaders and organisations will operate with their

partners in ICSs from April 2022. The LGA has been consulted on the scope, tone and content of the document, and many of its concerns have been addressed.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "It is good to see NHS England and NHS Improvement's inclusive approach to developing the design framework."

"We hope that this way of working will also be adopted by NHS leaders at regional and system level, in developing ICSs as a partnership of equals."

"The LGA supports the broad objectives of ICSs – to improve health and wellbeing outcomes through greater collaboration, more community based care and support, and addressing the wider determinants of health."

In brief

Early years 'is underfunded'

An Early Years Alliance report has found that underfunding of early years has led to higher childcare costs for parents. Its research shows that the funding rate given to councils in England for the 'free childcare' offer is two-thirds of what the Government thought would be needed to fully fund the scheme. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "We have long highlighted that the early entitlements are underfunded. The forthcoming Spending Review should properly resource all early years settings so that councils and providers can support the Government's ambition to reduce the attainment gap and ensure that every child has the best start in life."

Domestic abuse

The Government is consulting on draft statutory guidance and regulations covering new duties on local authorities in England to provide support for domestic abuse victims and their children living in relevant safe accommodation. Cllr Nesil Caliskan, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said the consultation provided a useful opportunity to feed in views and help ensure victims "receive the right help and support within safe accommodation". She added: "The £125 million announced in the Spending Review to implement the new statutory duty is good, but this funding is only for the 2021/22 financial year and councils would benefit from longer-term funding to allow for better planning and greater consistency for vital support services. We need an equal focus on, and funding for, prevention and early intervention measures that aim to prevent domestic abuse happening in the first place."

Pay offer rejected

The local government trade unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) have rejected a 1.5 per cent pay offer from April 2021, made to local government services ('Green Book') employees. The unions have asked for urgent talks with the National Employers.

'Put councils at heart of levelling up' - LGA

Placing councils at the heart of the Government's levelling up ambitions would help create job and career opportunities where they are most needed as the nation recovers from the pandemic, the LGA has said.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, called on government to use the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill to introduce a joined up, place-based employment, skills and careers system that provides access to quality education and new training opportunities.

He said: "The bill should be used as an opportunity to tackle our fragmented employment and skills system, with a greater role for councils and employers to help create jobs and training opportunities in their local communities."

"Councils are uniquely placed to bring all partners together to create greater opportunities for those who are unemployed

and help achieve our shared ambition with government to level up across the country."

The LGA is also calling for more funding to help adults with lower qualifications improve their skills levels so they can get more people into jobs.

Cllr Bentley added: "The adult education budget has been critical to helping people and should be restored to 2010 levels so councils can provide the best possible support."

"There are undoubtedly challenges ahead but, working together locally across the sector, councils and combined authorities have the passion and expertise to rise to the challenge."

Calls for a greater role for councils to tackle unemployment and skills shortages come as exclusive LGA polling reveals that 58 per cent of MPs and 80 per cent of Peers support more freedom for councils to drive employment and training opportunities in their local communities. ● See p9, p20.

Libraries 'can help children catch up'

Investing in libraries is key to driving the national recovery from COVID-19 and enabling children to catch up on lost learning, the LGA has said.

Many libraries are already supporting children to recover from missed classroom time and are helping to plug the widening attainment gap, for example via telephone support to families receiving laptops for home schooling, virtual library services, homework clubs and online reading groups.

They are also supporting plans for an enhanced 'summer reading challenge' which will include a range of free online activities, games and fun videos to supplement children's reading skills.

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: "Libraries can play a key role in our national recovery from COVID-19, supporting local communities, and in particular helping children catch up on lost education, and supporting adults to retrain through jobs and skills advice."

"They are a fantastic resource for local areas which is why they need the necessary

investment to remain open and continue the great work they already do in the long term."

"Our libraries have worked hard to adapt to new ways of providing services throughout the past year and remain one of the few free cultural and educational services available in every part of the country."

"They will also be crucial to our ambitions for addressing imbalances between our towns and cities."



Children's services overspend due to demand

Eight in 10 councils in England had to overspend on children's social care budgets to a combined total of £832 million in 2019/20, LGA analysis shows.

The overspend, fuelled by soaring demand to help safeguard children and funding pressures, was recorded despite councils increasing their budgets by £535 million that year and by £1.1 billion in the past two years.

In the decade up to 2020, the number of Section 47 enquiries, carried out when councils have reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or at risk of, significant harm, has increased from 89,300 to 201,000 – a rise of 125 per cent.

The number of children in care in England also increased, from 64,470 to 80,080 – a 24 per cent rise.

The LGA said councils want to work with government to prioritise a child-centred recovery plan and play a leading role in the government-

commissioned independent review of the care system, alongside children, families, and partners.

It said this must include a long-term sustainable funding solution so councils can protect children at risk of harm. Councils are also urging government to reinstate the £1.7 billion removed from the early intervention grant since 2010, to help prevent problems escalating in the first place.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils stand ready to work with government to ensure no child is left behind as we recover from the pandemic.

"The demand on children's social care services is unsustainable. It is vital that children's services are fully funded to give children the right help at the right time, which includes providing the early intervention and prevention support that can stop children and families reaching crisis point in the first place."



Social care 'needs reform' to support children

Children's social care is under significant strain with more families being investigated, higher numbers of children in care and spiralling costs as money is increasingly spent on crisis intervention, an independent report has found.

Underlying this are significant and concerning inequalities, with deprivation, ethnicity and prior care experience all associated with increased likelihood of state intervention.

'The Case for Change', the first report from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, found that when the state steps in, too often the focus is on assessment and investigation – not support.

The review, which says children's social care needs major reform and investment, will produce a final report with recommendations for change early in 2022.

Cllr Teresa Heritage, Vice Chairman of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "We support the ambition of the independent review of children's social care to make sure children, including those in care, grow up in loving, stable and safe environments.

"Councils have been raising the issues within 'The Case for Change' for some years, including the need for government departments to work better together, reforms to the placements market, and more investment in the services that change children's lives.

"There are many brilliant people working to improve the lives of children and their families, from social workers and foster carers to teachers, nurses and police officers.

"Their dedication, in the face of enormous challenges, should be commended and they must be listened to alongside those with lived experience as we seek solutions."

Sexual harassment 'normalised' in schools

An Ofsted review has found that sexual harassment, including online sexual abuse, has become 'normalised' for children and young people in schools.

Around nine in 10 of the girls Ofsted spoke to said that sexist name calling and being sent unwanted explicit pictures or videos happened 'a lot' or 'sometimes'.

Its review found that children often don't see the point of challenging or reporting this harmful behaviour because it is seen as a normal experience.

Pupils said adults often don't realise the prevalence of sexual harassment that occurs both inside and outside school, and Ofsted found that many teachers consistently underestimate the scale of these problems or didn't identify sexual harassment and sexualised language as significant problems.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Any incidence of sexual harassment or assault is abhorrent. No child should fear going to school, and we must all look carefully at how we can change the attitudes in our society that lead to this behaviour being normalised.

"Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility, and local safeguarding partnerships, including councils, health providers and the police,



along with schools, will want to consider carefully the findings and recommendations of this report.

"Good quality relationships and sex education will be a positive step in ensuring young people understand what healthy relationships look like, and the importance of consent, respect and privacy."

In brief

Birthday honours

The former chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board was among the councillors and officers recognised for their services to local government in the Queen's Birthday Honours last month. Ian Hudspeth, the former Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, was made an OBE. The LGA's own Grace Collins, an adviser in the leadership and localism team, becomes an MBE. Grace has helped more than 10,000 councillors through various LGA personal and political leadership programmes, and leads the weekend events for young councillors, and black, Asian and minority ethnic councillors.

Thank you day

The LGA will be celebrating the local government colleagues and people in our communities who have gone above and beyond over the past 18 months, on 'Thank You Day' on 4 July. Organised by the Together Coalition, the day is supported by hundreds of organisations, including the Scouts and Guides, Rotary and the Royal Voluntary Service, the Daily Mirror and The Sun, the Football Association and the Church of England. Resources available include a guide for local government (see www.thankyouday.org.uk/create-your-own/). Camden, Bradford and Leeds are among the councils taking part, and if you have any plans or will be celebrating the day via social media, please email sophie.page@local.gov.uk so we can amplify your messages.

Ex-LGA chairman joins MHCLG board

Lord Gary Porter CBE, former LGA Chairman and Leader of South Holland District Council, has been appointed to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Departmental Board. Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "Gary's long-term and continuing experience as a council leader, his work as LGA Chairman and recently as our building safety spokesperson, will prove to be invaluable to the ministerial team and senior officials. His appointment is a positive sign of MHCLG's determination to be a powerful advocate for local government across central government."

Local leadership 'key' to climate change challenge

Councils have a significant role to play in supporting and advancing the UK's net zero ambitions in partnership with government, industry and communities, the LGA has said.

Following the G7 summit in Cornwall last month and ahead of the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow this November, the LGA is highlighting some of the innovative and proactive work councils are doing across the country to tackle climate change.

As place-shapers, convenors of communities and businesses, asset owners, and problem-solvers with significant purchasing and market-shaping powers, councils are at the forefront of delivering real, tangible changes in the transition to net zero.

Ninety per cent of councils have declared a climate emergency and many have been devising and implementing new ways of reducing their carbon footprint, by increasing biodiversity and transforming local infrastructure.

Examples include plans to transform Birmingham's road network to encourage

people to walk, cycle and take public transport instead of using their cars; the introduction of the first electric refuse collection vehicle, in Oxford; Middlesbrough attaining 'Tree City of the World' status; and plans for one of the UK's largest net zero carbon housing developments in York.

Cllr David Renard, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: "Councils understand the urgent need to tackle climate change and have been making active changes in their communities to benefit the environment.

"Councils are intrinsic to transitioning our places and empowering our communities and businesses to a net zero future. They are well-placed to translate national climate ambitions into transformative action on the ground.

"By working in partnership with government, councils can continue to shape their local areas to help achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner."

● See www.local.gov.uk/climate-change, and p14

Six-point plan to prevent homelessness

The LGA has set out a six-point plan to protect vulnerable households who could face the prospect of losing their homes, following the lifting of the ban on bailiff-enforced evictions at the end of May.

It is calling for a package of measures to be introduced, including: bringing forward the Government's pledge to end 'no fault evictions'; improved protection through the welfare system (including maintaining increases in universal credit and local housing allowance rates); and an immediate review of the impact of the overall benefits cap in the context of the pandemic.

Councils should have enough resources to support households at risk of homelessness – this includes restoration of local welfare funding to at least £250 million a year.

The plan also calls for powers for councils to acquire empty homes, and for a step-change in social housing – the LGA is calling for 100,000 social homes for rent to be delivered every year.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "The Government was right



to introduce the ban on evictions, and eviction enforcement, from the start of the pandemic. It gave vital reassurance to families who were at risk of losing their homes.

"However, lifting the ban will leave some households at the cliff-edge of becoming homeless.

"Our six-point plan would help ensure as many people as possible remain in their homes and go towards preventing homelessness from happening in the first place."

PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary priorities

The LGA is seeking to influence a range of new legislation that affects the work of councils

Following the Queen's Speech in May (see first 660), the Government is bringing forward a range of new measures as it seeks to build back better from the pandemic.

The parliamentary discussions on these proposals are a key opportunity for the LGA to continue to make the case for place-based leadership, and we are focusing our work on the bills councils would like us to influence on their behalf – on planning, the environment, skills and further education, health and care, and building safety.

A Planning Bill is expected by the autumn and we are regularly briefing for parliamentary debates and giving evidence – most recently to a Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into the planning system in England.

The committee's report endorsed our call for councils to have powers to levy council tax charges on incomplete properties if developers are too slow building out sites with planning permission.

This work helps us build a compelling narrative to make the case for an efficient, well-resourced, accessible, democratic and locally led planning system.

Tackling the climate emergency is a key part of the LGA's work and we have been showcasing councils' environmental leadership in our briefings to Parliament.

The Environment Bill, currently in committee in the Lords, forms part of the Government's plans to create a framework for achieving net zero. In debates, Peers have highlighted councils' important role in environmental protection, with a

number referencing the LGA's messages.

LGA Vice-President Baroness Eaton (Con) highlighted the work councils are already doing to meet environmental goals, and that they will need the appropriate skills and resources to deliver on any new responsibilities.

Meanwhile Lord Wigley (Plaid Cymru) echoed our concern that the bill does not provide assurance that the full costs of the proposed producer responsibility scheme for waste will be met by producers, with a risk of the financial burden falling on councils.

The Government is introducing a wide range of measures to take forward its levelling-up agenda, including improving skills provision and reforming further education, as per the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.

At the bill's second reading in the Lords, Baroness Wilcox, LGA Vice-President and Labour Spokesperson for Equalities, referenced our concerns about the introduction of employer-led local skills improvement plans (LSIPs), and made the case that mayoral combined authorities and councils should be strategic partners in developing and managing these plans.

Responding on behalf of the Government, Baroness Berridge gave assurances that LSIPs will be led by employers with the involvement of mayoral combined authorities and proper consultation with local partners.

Health and social care will continue to be a priority throughout this Parliament, with the Government set to introduce a Health and Care Bill laying the foundations for a more integrated health and care system. The LGA set out its position on a white paper on integrated care systems in May, and since then has been working with government to shape the proposals.

Finally, a draft Building Safety Bill was published last year. This cannot come soon enough to reform our broken building safety system, and the LGA continues to influence pre-legislative scrutiny.

In addition to these priority bills, we will keep a watching brief on other legislation – including measures on electoral integrity, procurement, online safety, and policing and crime – and, as needed, put forward local government's thinking.



Visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament for more on the LGA's parliamentary work. See www.lgafirst.co.uk/features/the-queens-speech-2021/ for last month's round-up of the Queen's Speech in first

Back local

Local leadership is key to levelling up inequalities and delivering an economic recovery that benefits all



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA

As a nation we have been through an unprecedented 15 months. The true impact of COVID-19 is not yet fully clear and will be felt for years to come. But there is much that we have learnt from this pandemic and that national government can learn from local government.

Government has coordinated the national strategy to tackle the pandemic, protecting jobs and businesses, rolling out vaccines and providing information to the public.

But it is local government that has turned this response into a reality on the ground – with local responses recognising different local needs.

This is a key theme of our annual conference report, which will be published next week when we meet virtually from 6-8 July.

The pandemic has highlighted the immense value of the strong local leadership provided by councils and the exceptional commitment of councillors and council staff who have been on the frontline in the battle against the virus.

Working closely with central government, local NHS partners, voluntary and community groups, they have put in a monumental effort to support and protect local communities.

During the crisis, central and local government have shown what can be achieved when we work together towards a shared goal – tens of thousands of rough sleepers

and homeless people helped off the streets, millions of the most vulnerable shielded from the virus, and local businesses supported to keep them going and save jobs.

Councils, with their directors of public health, have also been at the centre of efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 in all its variants and support our hugely successful vaccination programme.

The pandemic has brought about rapid societal change, transforming people's attitudes, behaviour and aspirations for what they want from their local community. For so many, their local area matters more now than it ever did. We need to value difference and the local voice, as that is what people want.

This means that the role local authorities play will have a greater significance as we all reimagine what our post-pandemic lives will look like.

Councils now want to build on this momentum and work with the Government, as equal partners, to achieve our shared ambition to level up communities that feel left behind by investing in people and transforming places.

One of the most important lessons from the pandemic is that public services are at their best when government enables councils to innovate and deliver new services locally. Those local differences must be viewed as positive, responding to local need that will be very different in different places.

We need to value difference and the local voice. Understanding local difference enables the delivery of services which respond to local need and genuinely level up communities.

In our conference paper, we explore a series of 'pen portraits' to give a resident-centred view of



“For so many, their local area matters more now than it ever did”

local services and explore the future journeys our residents will be facing.

They show that, as we build back better from the pandemic, our communities will need councils and the local services they provide more than ever before.

If the Government is to fulfil its pledge to level up the entire country and improve the lives of all its citizens, it will need adequately funded and empowered councils everywhere.

Bringing power and resources closer to all of us is the key for all our communities to thrive. This is a vision supported by many in Parliament and by residents, three-quarters of whom trust their local council to make decisions about how services are provided locally.

More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of MPs say local councils are best placed to administer the delivery of public health and 72 per cent to run contact tracing; 80 per cent say councils should have more financial freedoms and powers to build homes in their area; and 72 per cent that they should have more control over local taxes, according to our own polling.

i The LGA's 'Back Local' report will be available at www.local.gov.uk/back-local from 6 July. Book your free place at our virtual annual conference by visiting www.local.gov.uk/conference



A rollercoaster ride

However, unsustainable funding pressures continue in respect of children's services, adult social care, and homelessness, leaving less money for councils to fund other services our communities rely on, like fixing potholes, cleaning streets and running leisure centres and libraries.

The forthcoming Spending Review is a real opportunity for the Government to provide a multi-year settlement that puts local government funding on a long-term sustainable footing. This will enable councils to more efficiently support government ambitions and plan the local services communities rely on, and which have proved so vital during the pandemic.

Local government has demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis that its biggest asset is its ability to lead and deliver on the most pressing issues facing residents right across the nation.

This local leadership is the only way we can tackle the significant challenges that lie ahead and ensure we improve lives and build inclusive growth in every corner of the country. That is a powerful offer to government and a proven route during this pandemic that should now be the cornerstone of our national recovery.

As we come through the most difficult period many of us have ever faced, we cannot afford to miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to 'Back Local'.



Lord Kerslake is
President of the LGA

When I was approached towards the end of my time in the civil service to take on the role of President of the LGA, it was an easy decision to say 'yes'.

Most of my career has been in local government; my great-grandfather and father were both councillors, as is my daughter – all for different political parties.

I am a passionate believer in the importance of local government and the value of having a single voice to champion its interests in the LGA.

Six years on, it is time for me step down and hand on the baton to Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who will take over as LGA President at its AGM on 6 July. I wish her all the very best in this.

The role of president is largely ceremonial, but it does give you the opportunity, with the LGA's vice-presidents, to connect with the current issues for local government

and speak on its behalf in Parliament.

To say that the past six years have been a rollercoaster ride would be an understatement. We have had Brexit, COVID-19, the commitment by central and local government to move to zero carbon by 2050, and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, following the terrible death of George Floyd in Minneapolis – to name just four momentous events.

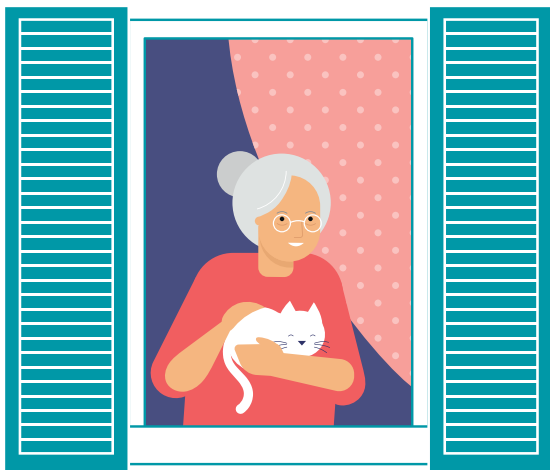
My first year in the Lords was consumed with challenging proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill, which would, among other things, have forced housing associations to adopt Right to Buy with discounts funded by the forced sale of high-value council properties.

This very divisive policy was fortunately put on the back burner when Theresa May became Prime Minister, in favour of a much more balanced policy that also allowed local authorities to borrow to build their own homes.

This change of policy is just one example of how persistent lobbying by the LGA has brought results to the benefit of its members.

As a representative body, the LGA faces the typical 'insider/outsider' challenge. If it is too critical of government, there is a risk that





→ Continued from previous page.

ministers will simply stop listening.

On the other hand, its members are likely to become restive if it does not challenge government plans that they believe are fundamentally wrong and work against its interests. Ideally, the LGA is drawn in early and can influence emerging policies before they are announced. But this isn't always

possible, particularly when election manifestos are being written.

I think that the LGA has navigated this difficult divide effectively. One of the reasons for this is the excellent quality of advice and support from LGA officers, who are consistently strong on both the big arguments and the detail. It is rare that a debate happens on domestic policy where LGA advice is not drawn on.

As well as the successes on policy, there are the ones that got away.

I am very frustrated that we still do not have a resolution to the urgent challenge of funding social care nor indeed to the sustainable long-term funding of local government itself.

We urgently need to hear the Government's plans on these vital issues.

Equally, local councils have proved themselves extraordinarily resilient and effective in their response to the pandemic but, as a country, we are still hampered by excessive centralism.

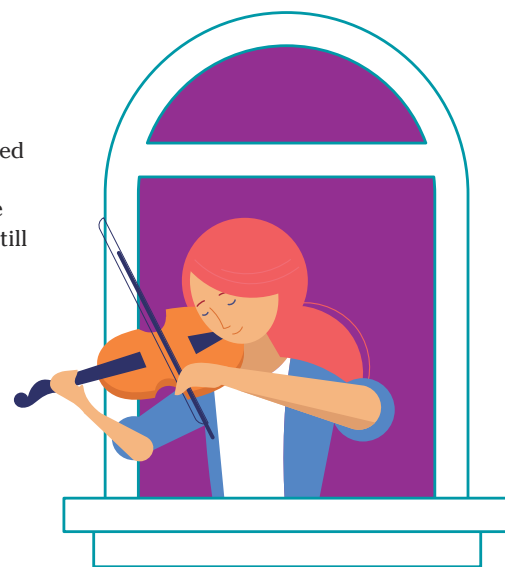
The promised White Paper on levelling up needs to include a step change in devolution of both powers and funding to allow local authorities to take the lead on economic recovery.

Finally, unless the Government changes its thinking, I fear we are going to have an almighty battle on the forthcoming Planning Bill, which

will dramatically reduce the role of councillors in the planning process and risks building the wrong homes in the wrong places.

Although no longer president from 6 July, I will continue to play an active role working with local councils and supporting the LGA in Parliament. There is still a lot that needs doing.

i The LGA's AGM takes place on 6 July. To take part, please book your place at www.local.gov.uk/conference



"I am very frustrated that we still do not have a resolution to the urgent challenge of funding social care"

A virtual delight

The LGA's annual conference kicks off online from 6-8 July, with a host of expert speakers from across local and national government, other public services, business and the third sector addressing more than 1,300 delegates.

It's not too late to book your free place, at www.local.gov.uk/conference. You can follow events on Twitter using #LGAconf21, or at www.local.gov.uk.

The 2021 conference will be an opportunity to discuss the latest issues in local government, and to explore how councils have been pivotal in responding and adapting to the pandemic.

Sessions will focus on economic recovery; living with COVID-19; climate change; council housebuilding; health and care integration; supporting children and young people; funding; mental health; building safety; planning reform; equalities; devolution; civility in public life; and 'spotlight on' sessions on leadership and innovation.

This year's confirmed conference speakers include:

- **Robert Jenrick MP**, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
- **Steve Reed MP OBE**, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
- **Sir Ed Davey MP**, Leader, Liberal Democrats
- **Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho**, Crossbench Peer
- **Professor Chris Whitty**, Chief Medical Officer for England and Chief Medical Adviser to the UK Government
- **Lord Stephen Greenhalgh**, Minister for Building Safety and Communities
- **Professor Sir Michael Marmot**, Director, UCL Institute of Health Equity
- **Dame Rachel De Souza DBE**, Children's Commissioner for England
- **Roman Kemp**, Radio DJ and Broadcast presenter
- **Ojay McDonald**, Chief Executive,

Association of Town & City Management

- **Katie Schmucke**, Deputy Director of Policy and Partnerships, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- **Kate Nicholls OBE**, Chief Executive, UK Hospitality
- **Adam Marshall**, Vice-Chair, World Chambers Federation and Director/Trustee, Industry and Parliament Trust
- **Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy**, President of the UK Association of Directors of Public Health
- **Polly Neate CBE**, Chief Executive, Shelter
- **Peter Baker**, Chief Inspector of Buildings, Health and Safety Executive
- **Su Moore**, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Jo Cox Foundation
- **Zulfi Karim**, President of the Council for Mosques in Bradford, and Director, Well Bradford.

The LGA's 2022 annual conference is due to take place in Harrogate from 28-30 June.

End slavery

hidden in supply chains



CCLA's anti-slavery initiative **Find it, Fix it, Prevent it** is a coalition of investors managing £7 trillion in assets. We are helping companies to identify, tackle and repair the effects of modern slavery in all its guises.

www.modernslaveryccla.co.uk

CCLA
GOOD INVESTMENT

CCLA Investment Management Limited
and CCLA Fund Managers Limited
are authorised and regulated by the
Financial Conduct Authority.

A baseline for emissions

A greenhouse gas accounting tool developed for councils has been updated



Councillor **Liz Green** is Vice Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, and has lead responsibility for climate change

Over the past 16 months, while people around the world have been isolated and in lockdowns, we saw some significant reductions in carbon emissions levels.

This improvement was seen across the UK; however, we know this relief will be short term. As we start to recover from the pandemic, we, in local government, have an opportunity to drive and influence a long-term and sustainable reduction in emissions.

You may be thinking that acting locally can only make a small difference to a problem as big as climate change. But with more than 300 councils in the UK (and the LGA) having declared a climate emergency, now is the time to act, and lead in our local communities by setting a good example.

So, what tangible steps could, and should, you take to do this?

While council reporting on emissions is currently voluntary, consistent and easy calculation of an annual carbon baseline is an important part of managing the carbon in our organisations.

Launched in late 2020, a greenhouse gas accounting tool was developed by Local Partnerships, working with

the LGA, specifically for council use. Having recently been updated to include direct and indirect emissions, as set out in the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (the most widely used greenhouse gas accounting standards), the tool produces summary tables and charts that can help us understand our most significant sources of emissions.

These findings are useful to help us prioritise specific local actions to reduce carbon emissions and, in turn, curtail the effects of climate change we are seeing in our local areas, the UK, and around the world.

This tool has the added reliability of being endorsed by the UK's Climate Change Committee and reviewed by the Carbon Disclosure Project for compliance.

The clear presentation of results means that, once a council has completed its data entry, these results can be uploaded onto LG Inform, the LGA's local area benchmarking tool. This makes it easy to see how your own council's progress matches up to those around you.

More than 200 councils across England and Wales have already downloaded this free tool, and recent feedback shows the benefits of its use.

In my own authority, Kingston upon Thames, we have been using the tool and been very pleased with it. Councils that have already sent their data back to the LGA are benefiting from the summary charts, tables and comparisons.

What is your council waiting for?

"I've found this tool to be extremely helpful. It's given me a better idea of what data to gather (and how), and clearly highlights what areas we need to target as a result."

Wyre Council

"The greenhouse gas tool was useful for benchmarking the council's emissions against other councils, to measure our progress in reducing our emissions."

Colchester Borough Council

"The greenhouse gas tool proved valuable in verifying our existing reporting methods and holds great potential in supporting shared learning between local authorities through the benchmarking process used."

West Sussex County Council

"It's been extremely helpful for us and is really user-friendly."

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

i See www.localpartnerships.org.uk/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool for the **greenhouse gas accounting tool**. The LGA's **LG Inform benchmarking site** is at lginform.local.gov.uk. **Cllr Green is speaking at the LGA's annual conference, in a plenary session on 'Green light services to address our planetary emergency'** – see www.local.gov.uk/conference to **book your free place**

Civility in public life

The LGA is developing more resources to help councillors who face online abuse



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA

There are growing concerns about the impact that an increase in misinformation and online abuse is having on democratic processes, particularly at a local level.

In response, the LGA is working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Northern Ireland LGA (NILGA) on a long-term project to improve civility in public life.

We hear a lot from councillors about how people communicate online. It ranges from annoying to threatening, has meant that many councillors fear for their safety, and takes valuable time away from the vital work of representing our communities, while the mental toll of receiving a lot of abuse can be huge.

Councillors also need to be aware of their own responsibilities to treat each other with respect, and to make sure their comments are not open to misinterpretation by others who might use them to create a social media storm against a fellow councillor.

LGA lead members are not immune from abuse either, and at a recent meeting detailed their own experiences of online kidnap and death threats, misogyny and racist abuse, from the public and sometimes colleagues

This can be hard. As an elected representative you want to engage with residents and colleagues to make sure you represent them well. The fast-paced nature of social media can make it feel that online queries should receive immediate responses – but no-one can

be at their best 24/7, nor are immediate responses always possible, necessary, or advisable.

To help you navigate the online world safely, we have published some infographics to help you set the tone of your contact with members of the public online and empower you to take appropriate action if communications break the rules of engagement.

These draw from the most recent available research and consultation with the sector, and are the first in a series of resources that we intend to publish on our website (local.gov.uk).

Working with Dr Sofia Collignon at Royal Holloway, University of London, we wanted to understand what was regarded as best practice internationally when dealing with online harassment, and to find out from councillors themselves what they felt worked. This led to our 'rules of engagement' infographic. Designed to be pinned to a social media profile, it gives you a framework for your online

engagement and sets the terms of how you will engage online, which everyone will understand.

The rules also give all users a clear 'code' of digital engagement by which they should operate and keep everyone safe. There is a clear statement that users can be blocked or posts deleted by page administrators if they fail to comply. The rules emphasise the importance of formal channels for casework, and that some responses may take time.

We've also collated some of the top tips for handling online abuse into a quick reference infographic. This saves time searching for advice and can identify quickly how you might want to deal with a situation. Sometimes that will mean knowing when to step back, consider content, and understand privacy settings, while other situations will need support from your council or the police.

Later this year, we'll publish a guide to digital citizenship, further information on tackling misinformation, plus updates to our popular councillors' guide to handling intimidation.

We've been really pleased by the response across the political spectrum. This is very important work, and the goal is to lead to better representation, improved decision-making, and more trust in the vital services our councils provide every day.



For all the LGA's resources on civility in public life, please visit www.local.gov.uk/civility-public-life



Support for new councillors

The LGA has set up an information hub to help newly elected members get to grips with their role

Summer seminars

As part of our programme for newly elected councillors, and following on from our popular national welcome events in June, we are now arranging a series of short, one-off, open-access webinars.

Topics are in response to feedback from newly elected councillors and will be delivered over the summer months, and these virtual events will further help you embrace your role as an effective community leader.

Featuring views and insight from experienced councillors, these webinars are free to attend and can be booked at www.local.gov.uk/events.

The first webinar in the programme, on being an effective ward councillor, will take place on 21 July. The second, on developing a safe and effective social media presence, will take place on 4 August.

Do please register for these events and look out for other sessions in the programme that will be of interest to you.

To complement these seminars, you should also take a look at the LGA's Virtual Annual Conference, which takes place from 6-8 July and is free for members (see www.local.gov.uk/conference).

The conference will provide an opportunity to hear from central and local government leaders, and to discuss and debate a wide range of issues of importance to our sector – from the pandemic to children's services, and economic recovery to housing. Newly elected councillors should find the range of sessions and discussions interesting.

As a newly elected councillor, the amount of information you may be expected to be aware of and understand in the first few months of your role can seem very overwhelming. Responding to the needs of your communities, and understanding the challenges faced by residents and businesses, will become increasingly important as we emerge from the challenges of the past year, and as you embrace the challenges of building resilience and providing leadership of place in the post-pandemic local government landscape.

To support you in your new role, the LGA has developed a dedicated new councillor hub (see www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-development/new-councillor-hub), to provide you with all the essential information you need as a newly elected councillor.

The hub has been developed as a 'one-stop shop' for vital information and advice to help you navigate the first few months of your term of office, and beyond.

It is intended to complement and support the advice and training given to you through your own council's induction programme. As well as providing useful information on the wider structure of local government, it offers key advice and support.

The hub outlines information about the support you can access

"The hub outlines the support you can access from the LGA"

from the LGA through our political group offices. It also signposts you to the many training and development opportunities offered through our government-funded sector support offer, including our wide range of webinars, events, e-learning, workbooks and development programmes.

We encourage you to make the most of all that the LGA offers and the hub is a great place to start to





explore all that we have for you as newly elected members and in your continued ongoing development as councillors.

Designed to provide you with valuable insight into the wider political landscape, the hub also includes interviews with experienced councillors from different types of councils across the country, who give advice, discuss the roles they undertake, and offer their views on some of the frequently asked questions raised by new councillors.

Do please take a moment to hear their reflections (see bit.ly/35kPLhZ), and see the panel (right) for their top tips for getting to grips with your new role.

Top tips for the recently elected...



"Sit in on as many meetings as possible. Learn how the council works, how decisions are made, and learn the rules."

"Get involved with the community. There's only so much you can do at the council office or on MS Teams meetings; you should see what projects are going on and get stuck in, and see what you can do to improve things locally."

Cllr **Robert Flatley** (Con) is Cabinet Support Member – Strategic Leadership, Culture and Tourism at Derbyshire County Council



"You can't change the world overnight. It's one step at a time. When you're doing things, just know that to make change does take time. Don't allow people to tell you what you cannot do; just work with the system and you can make the changes that will affect people's lives."

"Learn the ropes. Learn policies, get to know your local area, get to learn who the professionals are in your area, get to know who the drivers are in your local area, and just take your time, build your networks, and make the changes you want, slowly. If you can know who's in your area and who you can work with, you can make a massive difference, as you're working with people in co-production instead of on your own."

Cllr **Paulette Hamilton** (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care at Birmingham City Council



"Ask questions. When I first became a councillor, that's all I did – if I didn't understand something, I'd just ask. There's never a stupid question and it's the best way to learn. Every question you ask will make you a better councillor."

"Enjoy it. It might be stressful, and it's a huge learning curve in the first year, but get through that and enjoy everything about it, because it's not an experience everyone has and you may never get to do it again – so just go with it and do as much as you can."

Cllr **Sarah Rouse** (Ind) is Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services at Malvern Hills District Council



"Be confident. Your residents know you are in an elected role and the expectation on you can sometimes be very high, but you cannot please everybody. Sometimes you will need to compromise; it's very important to be 100 per cent confident and reassuring to the public that you can respond to their needs."

"Know your ward and your constituents. You should be able to interact with your community, and it's important to engage with the residents, know the issues they're facing and be in regular contact with them."

"You can do a street letter about an issue and bring it to them, or you can visit them if they have an issue and they will be happy to see you and know you care about them. It's important to make an effort to know your area."

Cllr **William Hounbo** (Lib Dem) is Deputy Leader of the Majority Opposition Group on Southwark Council

Building back a better partnership for passengers and communities



Paul O'Neil,
Managing Director
of Arriva UK Bus

C OVID-19 really pressed home the importance of local services to us all. I want to thank councillors and council officers up and down the country for the support and flexible approach that they shared with us as an industry during the pandemic. It made it possible for us to keep key workers moving throughout the most difficult of circumstances; it showed our working relationships at their best.

Now we face the task of building back bus services better so that we can play our full role in helping our communities recover. Buses are the most used form of public transport in the UK. But even before the pandemic, there had been a downward trend in bus usage for nearly a decade, from well over 5.1 billion passenger journeys in 2010 to under 4.8 billion in 2019.

I firmly believe that the National Bus Strategy with its core focus on driving up passenger journeys, and its requirement to set tough and tangible targets, should be welcomed by all. Increased bus usage is good for the economy and the environment. We also know that using public transport helps to tackle loneliness and encourages more active lifestyles, so increasing bus ridership is a win-win for society.

Now is the time to be ambitious about the future of local bus services. Arriva stands

i Arriva operates more than 5,000 buses across the UK, in London, the South East, the Midlands, Essex, Yorkshire, the North East, the North West and North Wales, employing over 15,000 people. To find out more about Arriva bus services in your area, visit www.arrivabus.co.uk or follow us on Twitter: @ArrivaGroup to see more of our thought-leadership work.



ready to help public transport authorities (PTAs) deliver their aspirations for local bus services in their areas, whether they be joined-up ticketing or new facilities onboard to improve the passenger experience.

Crucially, there are some important factors to making this strategy a success. First, it is important to understand what passengers and potential passengers actually want from their buses. We know our passengers well. They want bus services that deliver the fundamentals above all else, our insights show this. They want frequent and reliable services with predictable journey times and fares that offer value for money and provide an incentive to choose the bus over their cars.

However, we cannot deliver all of these basics by ourselves.

The National Bus Strategy has formalised the new relationships that will be expected between PTAs and bus operators. Partnership with PTAs is essential if we are to deliver for communities. So, let's form real quality, practically minded partnerships between operators and PTAs, building on what we learnt during the pandemic – relationships that recognise the collaboration and heavy lifting needs to be done by all involved.

We stand ready to deliver the aspirations of PTAs and want to move at pace.

We know that road congestion puts people

off travelling by bus, but the good news is that councils can do something about this. Indeed, the strategy explicitly states that plans should be formed "for bus lanes on ANY roads where there is a frequent bus service, congestion and physical space to install one". The upcoming Bus Service Improvement Plans must deliver these. Operators are perfectly placed to help council officers decide where bus priority measures will have the maximum positive impact; we want to help.

Getting this right will have knock-on effects for the whole of society. We'll be able to connect more people with jobs, with healthcare and with education. And importantly, we can help the country realise its climate change targets and its economic recovery.

By working together, we can deliver good value for money for our customers and for the taxpayer. We can drive up bus usage and get people out of their cars, which must be our number one goal.

If we can do that together, we will have built a truly sustainable and robust bus network across England.



Addressing barriers to being a councillor

Support is available from the LGA and its political groups to encourage more diversity among candidates in local elections



Councillor **Judi Billing** MBE is Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board and Leadership Lead Member

Ensuring that councils are truly representative of our communities is a key challenge for local government.

Reflecting the local population is vital in helping councils run efficiently and for communities to thrive. It brings in the knowledge and lived experience of the needs and aspirations of everyone in the local community. It makes community engagement so much more real and useful.

Diverse representation has the power to inform better policies and outcomes, enable greater innovation and preventative approaches, and to create new avenues of communication

and trust across communities and the public sector.

Ultimately, of course, it's the electorate that decides who becomes a councillor, but we all have a role to play in building a pipeline of talented candidates from which to choose.

There is also much work to do in addressing the barriers that can prevent new people from getting involved and ensuring the culture of local government enables them to take the next step, thrive in the role, and progress through to leadership positions.

As part of the LGA's government-funded sector support programme, the Be a Councillor campaign provides councils with bespoke support and a toolkit.

Most local authorities undertake activities on local democracy and increasing civic engagement, and promoting the role of the councillor can form an important part of this work. Some of the best examples of this have

been in Local Democracy Week events with schools and pupils of all ages. The earlier the better, in my view.

Run by the LGA's leadership team, Be a Councillor works with councils to help raise curiosity around the role of the elected member through assisting with local communications, stakeholder and outreach mapping, and delivering inspiring events.

The support is built from good practice at councils and can be fully customised for local needs. The team is always keen to help develop new ideas.

The LGA's political group offices run programmes that reflect each group's values and traditions. We, as individual councillors, local political groups and national parties, can help build a legacy for the achievements we have made in our local areas by proactively looking outside of our established networks to talent spot and support new people who would make great councillors.

To raise public awareness, the LGA has produced information and materials for the public to access on the Be a Councillor website (www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor).

The campaign also works with external organisations to further understand the barriers to participating in local government and to reach new networks.

While COVID-19 has deeply affected people's lives and continues to do so, there is still an appetite for Be a Councillor information and events from people keen to get involved in their local community.

Running virtual events provides additional opportunities to break down some of the barriers people find when considering standing for election and can therefore help reach larger numbers of people and under-represented groups.

I encourage everyone in local government to play their part in talent-spotting, taking action on the barriers, and supporting new people to get involved.

Only by encouraging the brightest stars to stand for election can we ensure that councils are able to do the best for our communities.



i For more information on how the LGA can support your council, please email the team on becouncillor@local.gov.uk. For political group programmes, contact paul.mccannah@local.gov.uk (Conservative); martin.angus@local.gov.uk (Labour); terry.stacy@local.gov.uk (Liberal Democrat); and sarah.woodhouse@local.gov.uk (Independent)



Cllr **Kevin Bentley** is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board and Councillor **Anntoinette Bramble** is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board



Education to employment

No young person should be left behind when it comes to training and jobs

Over the past year, young people have been one of the groups hit hardest by the impact of the pandemic on the jobs market, and this has affected their ability to transition into education or employment effectively.

We know how early experiences can scar a person's adult life for years to come. That's why it's vital for every young person to have an effective transition into adulthood and employment. But this can be complex and challenging for many, in particular the disadvantaged, such as those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), looked-after children, and low-income groups.

Improving youth participation in education, employment and training (EET) is key for councils.

While we have a number of statutory duties relating to youth participation – including ensuring all young people up to the age of 18 (and up to 25 for SEND and other groups) are engaged in high-quality education and training – there are many barriers and challenges to us fulfilling these for young people, and a need to better understand them.

That's in addition to identifying solutions and delivering effective support to those who are – or who

are at risk of being – not in education, employment or training (NEET).

So, last autumn, the LGA set out to explore these challenges with the sector. Eleven councils, or groups of councils, took part in an action learning project to look at and share 'what works'.

In May, we launched a report capturing action learning from the research project – 'Education to employment: supporting youth participation'. The work builds on our previous report, 'Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation' (see **first** 653).

The report makes a series of recommendations, including on developing online provision that is complementary to standard service delivery, and providing local authority ring-fenced opportunities for NEET young people in need of support.

It also recommends having a centralised, single point of contact for young people, employers and training providers (for example, an employment and skills hub), and intensive, tailored support to address wider issues, such as mental health problems.

All this matters, not just for young people themselves, but for economic recovery, for aligning local skills needs and geographical areas, and for helping areas to 'level up'.

"Early experiences can scar a person's adult life for years"

Care leavers in Liverpool

Re-engaging young people who are care leavers and who have been NEET for 12 months or more has been a key challenge for Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

The number of looked-after children in its councils ranges from 90 to 140 per 10,000, compared with the national average of 65 per 10,000).

The experience of the combined authority was that care leavers tend to have lower educational attainment by age 16, compared with non-care leavers. As a result of negative experiences of education, coupled with other issues, such as SEND and stability, this cohort can be difficult to engage.

A range of programmes aims to support care leavers to re-engage and participate. These include: specific apprenticeship and training opportunities for care leavers; a 12-week employability programme leading to a traineeship; the recruitment of 'employability coaches' working in the care-leaver team to help support young people into education, employment or training; and dedicated staff and bespoke support to address individual needs.



'Education to employment: supporting youth participation' is freely available at bit.ly/3pYDB7L. See bit.ly/3pYgsm0 for 'Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation'

Employment and skills support

Councils have an important role to play in joining up support for people retraining or facing unemployment



Councillor Sir
Richard Leese is
Chair of the LGA's
City Regions Board

As we look to recover from the pandemic, and with the ending of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, there could be an increase in the number of people facing unemployment or seeking to retrain to enter a new career.

The latest long-term unemployment projections suggest that there could be an increase of one million people out of work by the end of this year, with those predominantly affected being young people aged 16 to 25, as well as older people who have fared less well when trying to re-enter the labour market after previous recessions.

Throughout the pandemic, local government has been trusted to coordinate employment, training and business support for their local area. Many set up redundancy taskforces, delivered grants to businesses, supported employers to create new Kickstart placements and created more within their own councils, and kept adults learning through community provision and online support.

As the vaccine is rolled out and the economy opens up, local government is turning its attention to planning and supporting recovery. Councils are uniquely placed in their communities to convene and work with local and national partners to address these challenges.

With adequate resourcing and powers, and the ability to work in partnership with national government and others at an early

stage, councils can help well-intended, but often disconnected, national schemes keep people in work and businesses recruiting.

This is why, working with the Learning and Work Institute and Rocket Science, we have produced a dedicated local employment and skills recovery hub, pulling together best practice from across the sector, as well as helpful jobs and skills recovery guides (see www.local.gov.uk/employment-skills-recovery-hub).

Although each council featured in the hub approached their response in different ways, the common thread among them all was local leadership and partnership.

Whether they were focused on shifting their service to online, working directly with businesses to mitigate impact, or developing a coherent council-wide response, there have been some big shifts in the position of councils' employment and skills functions and offer, and this provides important learning for the whole sector.

For example, Devon County Council had to respond rapidly to the collapse of one of the region's biggest employers, Flybe, as well as the other economic impacts brought on by the pandemic.

It swiftly set up a redundancy support team – the 'joining glue' for local support – which linked recently redundant workers to training support, both through the adult education budget and a £750,000 fund to provide training focused on transition to growth sectors.

The complexity of employment and skills policy means there will often be areas where better join-up would deliver better results. Given all delivery is ultimately local, this can only be done locally, and is a key role for councils.

Perhaps the biggest message across all the guides is the role local government can play in making sure local growth, development and regeneration deliver good jobs and skills opportunities, and that local people can access these opportunities.

We face a big year, to help increase employment, skills and growth. By working together locally across the sector, we have the passion and expertise to rise to the challenge.



See www.local.gov.uk/employment-skills-recovery-hub for the LGA's local employment and skills recovery hub

"Councils are uniquely placed to convene and work with local and national partners"



Temporarily
Closed {Due to
COVID-19}

Digital political leadership

Support is available to help councillors navigate the world of digital and technology



Councillor **Peter Fleming** is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Digital tools and ways of working – including improving the quality of data and how we use it – represent a significant opportunity to change the way our councils support the communities we serve and to enhance the positive impact we can have on the lives of our residents and businesses. For many councils, the COVID-19 response – necessarily using remote technologies – has accelerated awareness of digital's potential and practice.

Leading a digital/data transformation agenda, particularly as a politician, is not easy, especially with all the other pressures on finances and so many other priorities demanding our attention.

Digital transformation needs to be seen as a cross-council programme, supporting the work of members and officers in their delivery of services to the public. How can we, as elected members, show political leadership of this agenda, creating the conditions in which great digital work happens?

The LGA ran a series of free introductory sessions for councillors earlier this year covering issues such as digital inclusion and connectivity, data and research, and digital in social care. I'm delighted to say you can access informative resource packs for all seven sessions on the LGA's website (see box, right).

Together with Cllr Neil Prior, Cabinet Member for Transformation at Pembrokeshire County Council, and Cllr Joyce McCarty, Deputy Leader and Digital Champion at Newcastle

City Council, I had the pleasure of presenting at the digital political leadership session. We led an in-depth discussion that tried to answer the question above, about leading digital transformation and making great work happen.

Colleagues in the session shared the importance of failure in innovation, and the key concept of 'fail fast, fail frequently'. This can be hard in the public sector, as we are rightly under scrutiny as to how we spend public money.

We need to encourage colleagues to come forward and share examples of where their councils have favoured incremental and experimental approaches to explore the art of the possible.

Another colleague emphasised how it is crucial that, as leaders, we create an environment that challenges assumptions and ask regularly 'why do we do it that way?'.

I believe the most valuable people

in a council are often those who have just joined as they find it easy and natural to ask that question, and they bring fresh, innovative ideas to the table.

Members and officers can find it difficult to abandon current ways of doing things, but we have to question whether services can be provided digitally in order to shift resources to human contact, where that is most needed.

It was an interesting discussion that illustrates the flavour of the debates across the entire series.

Digital and data training

Councillors have an essential role to play in the creation of a culture where officers and residents feel empowered to embrace digital and data innovation. Getting this right is often difficult without local and national support.

The LGA's introduction to digital and data sessions allowed councillors and officers to support each other to understand how the topics covered were crucial to local success, and how councillors can play an enabling role in digital transformation.

The sessions covered digital inclusion and connectivity, smart places technology, digital communications, data and research, cyber security, digital in social care and shielding vulnerable people, and digital political leadership.

Resource packs on the sessions are available at www.local.gov.uk/councillor-introduction-digital-and-data-training-sessions-resource-packs



COVID-19 has pushed the health and social care sector to breaking point.

CareCubed is supporting commissioners and providers through these tough times by ensuring that the best person-centred care is provided at a fair price for all.

CareCubed is used by 1 in 3 local authorities to provide a 'common currency' for a structured, well informed, collaborative relationship focused on supporting residents to live their best life.

- A structured, consistent and data driven approach to pricing.
- Quantify the performance and position of local care markets.
- Ensure value for money from the public purse and sustainability for providers.
- Collaborate to redesign services, increase supply and encourage new providers into the market.

To find out how CareCubed will benefit your authority, please get in touch with us here:

<http://www.iese.org.uk/project/carecubed>



care³
care • clarity • cost

Capita

Turn it off and on again?

Covid-19 has reset citizens' expectations.

You have a once in a lifetime opportunity to rethink how we deliver resilient and inclusive services for the future.

We would like to help.

**Contact our Customer Experience Director,
Chris Melia at
Christopher.Melia@capita.com**



Aico are leading the way in home life safety by pioneering new technologies and offering high quality alarms, developed and manufactured in Ireland. All alarms meet UK standards and offer a variety of sensor types to guarantee protection for every home, the cornerstone of which is delivering Education, Quality, Service and Innovation.

In 2020, Aico expanded their Connected Home offering with the acquisition of leading Internet of Things (IoT) solutions provider, HomeLINK. HomeLINK leverages cutting edge smart home integration and analytics technologies, providing a complementary platform to present a synergistic approach to IoT.



www.aico.co.uk | 01691 664100 | enquiries@aico.co.uk

an  Company

↓ 98%

That's how much councils can save per inbound street and highways fault report with

 FixMyStreet | Pro

Visit societyworks.org/fmspro



*Buckinghamshire Council are saving up to 98% per report now that they're using FixMyStreet Pro.

FixMyStreet Pro is provided by SocietyWorks - the trading subsidiary of not-for-profit democracy group mySociety.

Forward thinking on falls



Councillor **Patricia Bradwell** OBE (Con) is Deputy Leader of Lincolnshire County Council

The launch of our Falls Response Unit in Lincolnshire will provide a vital service for many older residents who might find themselves stranded and waiting for help.

In a large rural county such as ours, the falls teams work together to reach people who have had a fall, without clogging up emergency services and diverting ambulances from getting to more critical incidents where patients might need life-saving support.

It builds on our successful pilot over the past few years. In December 2018, we started the pilot to respond to long delays experienced by residents who take a fall, and the consequent need for other services and possible hospital treatment.

Funded through a grant agreement between the county council and East Midlands Ambulance Service, the Falls Response Service was subcontracted to Lincolnshire Integrated Volunteer Emergency Services (LIVES).

It's proved to be a game changer for many people who would otherwise be left

stranded waiting for help to arrive. It's already shown to have a significant impact on reducing hospital admissions, with just less than half of patients avoiding a trip to the hospital as a result of being assessed and treated by the LIVES Falls team.

To give you an idea, that's more than 500 patients between October 2020 and March 2021 supported on the scene, allowing them to stay at home safely.

There's an average 25-minute response time for people who have fallen and called for help, and teams attended an average of 200 patients each month.

Of those who had fallen at home, 81 per cent were aged 65 or over and 40 per cent were aged 85 or over.

So, based on this success, we have moved to consolidate the longer-term future of the service with Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group and LIVES colleagues.

Together with our health colleagues, we've committed to put £273,000 a year into the new Falls Response Unit, up to March 2024.

I'm sure the benefits will be there for all to see. It will provide three falls teams across the county with specially equipped vehicles and equipment to be able to perform diagnostics and lift patients from the floor, with emergency treatment if necessary.



It provides patients with early intervention and support to key services and comprehensive care packages to prevent further falls – including support from our wellbeing service, fire and rescue, and safeguarding, and access to community beds.

In addition, it integrates the community emergency medicine service alongside the ambulance 999 emergency centre to get support out even quicker.

The service is open from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, and estimates suggest it will visit up to 3,000 patients per year, with an expected reduction of 1,500 ambulance attendances.

The ongoing reduction in recurrent falls will ease the pressure on frontline health and social care services in the longer term.

The Falls Response Service remains a prime example of innovation and partnership in Lincolnshire through joint working across the health and care system, together with voluntary and community sector services.

This type of forward thinking is vital to rural counties such as Lincolnshire and I'm following up with government to highlight how we are making a difference for our older residents.



Ministers to address LGA conference



Councillor **Izzi Seccombe** OBE is Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group

I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to Ian Hudspeth, the former Leader of Oxfordshire County Council and lately Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, who was recognised in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours list by being made an OBE.

While Ian is no longer a councillor, I am delighted that his dedication and hard work has been rewarded.

During his service in local government, he went above and beyond to support his local community and contributed towards positive change, especially in the areas of adult social care and public health, which over the past year were a huge challenge

because of the pandemic. I wish him all the best for the future.

On another matter, as you may already know, the LGA's virtual annual conference takes place next week (6-8 July).

This showpiece event for local government is an opportunity to get together virtually, share best practice, and hear from top-class speakers, including Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Scientific Adviser; Building Safety Minister Lord Stephen Greenhalgh; Professor Sir Michael Marmot, who led the 2010 review of health inequalities; and Dame Rachel De Souza DBE, Children's Commissioner for England.

I am particularly excited to welcome Robert Jenrick MP, our Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to conference on 6 July.

While largely a cross-party event, there will also be time for us to meet at conference as a Conservative family in group sessions to discuss key topics, such as planning and adult social care,

among ourselves and with guest speakers.

I am pleased to inform you that Luke Hall, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, and Chris Pincher, Minister for Housing, are also among our guest speakers.

I would strongly encourage you to make every effort to attend both our group AGM on 6 July, and the Conservative group meetings on 7 and 8 July. If you have not already registered, please visit www.local.gov.uk/conference to book your free place.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you virtually at the LGA conference.

"This is an opportunity to get together virtually, share best practice, and hear from top-class speakers"



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA

Once and for all

In his first speech after becoming Prime Minister, Boris Johnson promised to "fix the crisis in social care, once and for all".

It was a welcome commitment to address a vital issue. In the nearly two years since, we have faced some of our most challenging times.

Social care has been visibly on the frontline throughout the pandemic, demonstrating it is not simply a set of services some people need because of age or disability, but is a key means by which people are supported to live their best life, whatever their circumstances.

Despite some helpful short-term support, social care still faces significant financial pressures. Ongoing uncertainty has made it difficult for councils, care providers and other partners to plan beyond the short term.

This is destabilising for people who draw on social care, as they rightly want to know that the support they need will be available in the future.

More broadly, there are many lessons to

be learned from the pandemic experience that need to be applied to our thinking about the future reform of care and support (see www.local.gov.uk/future-adult-social-care).

We are part of a group of national adult social care organisations, including the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), Skills for Care, the Care Provider Alliance and Think Local, Act Personal, that works on shared priorities and seeks to speak with a single voice on key issues.

Last month, the group published a joint letter to the Government stressing the importance and urgency of adult social care

reform (www.local.gov.uk/adult-social-care-reform-our-letter-government).

It called for funding for short-term stabilisation; urgent publication of proposals for reform and investment to secure the long-term future of social care; and short-term investment to support transformation, innovation, prevention, action on inequalities and a new deal for the care workforce.

Reform should be seen as a key part of the wider plan to upgrade England's infrastructure – and must go further than simply ensuring care costs are capped to prevent people having to sell their homes to pay for care.





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

Time to act on social care

Adult social care has been pushed to the bottom of the agenda for too long and the consequences are clearer than ever before.

In July 2019, after he became Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said: "We will fix the crisis in social care once and for all, and with a clear plan we have prepared to give every older person the dignity and security they deserve."

"We need a root and branch review of the system to ensure that it is fair and accessible for all"

However, there was only a passing reference to adult social care in the Queen's Speech, and crucial discussions at the heart of government have been delayed once again.

We need a root and branch review of the system to ensure that it is fair and accessible for all.

In a recent survey of councils, nearly half reported a rise in community referrals of more than 10 per cent over the past six months. And this increased pressure is being felt not only within local authorities, but also by families and communities.

These problems have been compounded by the pandemic, and the same survey found that 67 per cent of local authorities with social care responsibilities said they were seeing more people seeking help because of breakdowns in carer arrangements.

Things need to change and we cannot wait any longer. A new adult social care system must be values-led, person-centred and fit for the demands now placed on it.

The Conservatives have had 11 years to tackle this issue – now is the time to act.



Councillor **Ruth Dombey**
OBE is Deputy Leader
of the LGA's Liberal
Democrat Group

Social care treated as an 'afterthought'

The Liberal Democrats have called on the Prime Minister to start urgent cross-party talks on social care reforms without delay, as a new report warns that local services are facing a 'deluge' of requests for care and support.

The warning comes in a survey by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, published recently. Meanwhile, a separate report by Parliament's Public Accounts Committee concludes that social care is "not properly funded, lacks transparency and urgently needs reform".

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of social care. But it has also shown that it is too often an afterthought for this Conservative Government.

More than 1.5 million people are missing out on the care they need. People are trapped in hospital, unable to leave because the proper follow-up care is not available. The NHS, local councils and unpaid carers are all under huge and growing pressure.

"We urgently need a new agreement for a long-term, sustainable future for social care"

This is happening because the Conservatives ripped up the previous cross-party agreement on social care, developed by Liberal Democrat ministers and based on the same values that underpin our NHS.

We urgently need a new agreement for a long-term, sustainable future for social care. The Government must finally publish its proposals and hold the cross-party talks ministers have been promising for years. And the LGA needs to be at that table now more than ever.

Local government is still reeling from the financial pressures of the pandemic – this cannot wait any longer.



Councillor **Mike Haines** is the LGA
Independent Group's
National Lead Peer

Climate change on the agenda

Despite high hopes, June's easing of lockdown was postponed and many of our councils are continuing to support communities and businesses through local outbreaks.

A vaccine booster programme is planned but with an autumn spike expected, we continue to press the Government to ensure our councils are adequately resourced and able to meet remotely.

"Local government hopes to have a strong presence at COP26 as local leaders of place"

Over the past month, our peer team has been busy providing remote support to new administrations, opposition groups and councillors. The group's support for members continues throughout July, including our new councillor surgery on 13 July and at the LGA's annual conference (6-8 July).

This year, the conference is free to attend and includes several group sessions: our AGM; a climate change session with UK100; and a webinar with Professor Colin Copus on the future of local government. If you haven't already, do sign up (www.local.gov.uk/conference).

This is my last column for **first**, with our group election results due on 6 July. As we look ahead, planning, levelling up, care, leisure and culture support will be priorities for the next political year along, of course, with climate change.

The G7 meeting in Cornwall was a useful precursor to the COP26 UN Climate Conference later this year, where local government hopes to have a strong presence as local leaders of place – a commitment the LGA will discuss at our general assembly thanks to a motion brought forward by our Green members.

I hope you have a good LGA conference and hopefully next year's gathering will be in person.

? Some LGA group articles may not be written by the group leader due to group elections taking place



Councillor **Tristan Chatfield** (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources at Birmingham City Council



Delivering on social value

Back in 2013, in an effort to improve the social value of the council's commissioning and procurement, Birmingham City Council adopted a social value policy and a living wage policy, and established the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility.

Social value considers how a proposed procurement might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area, and is one of the tools the council uses to help it award contracts to businesses and organisations.

The policy continues to have a positive

impact, as set out in our first annual report on social value, with £194,619,328 spent by Birmingham City Council in the local economy over the past year – including more than £3 million on social enterprises.

Of the council procurement spend, 79 per cent is within the West Midlands, with 56 per cent being spent in Birmingham itself.

This year has seen 68,141 weeks of local employment generated from the council's procurement work, helping to provide well-paid and secure employment for people across the city and the region.

One of the improvements we have made is the introduction of 'ward multipliers' to encourage activity in our most deprived wards, by rewarding bidders

working in these areas with a higher score during competitive tenders.

Other than work placements, the pandemic has not had a negative impact on our social value work.

We know there are further improvements we can make, and we will continue to work with our partners to expand our social value impact. But our report shows that Birmingham City Council is leading the way in supporting the local economy through procurement.

I am delighted that we have been able to invest in businesses from across our region, helping to boost our economy while also providing the services that our city requires and consistently delivering social value to the people of Birmingham.

We are proud of our model of procurement and it yields brilliant results, both in terms of service delivery and in the social value that it generates.



See bit.ly/2R06dAr for Birmingham's full report on social value

Consultation on council audit



Steve Freer is Chair of Public Sector Audit Appointments

Local government audit has faced more than its fair share of problems over the past few years, as catalogued by Sir Tony Redmond in his widely discussed report that was issued last September.

The Government clearly recognises the urgency of the challenges and has responded to Sir Tony's report via two significant announcements by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, in December and May.

Public Sector Audit Appointments



(PSAA) is very pleased to be confirmed in its role as Appointing Person in the latter statement. This will include leading the next major procurement of audit services for the period 2023-2028.

We will carry out the procurement itself in 2022, and this autumn local authorities will have the opportunity to opt in to PSAA's national scheme for 2023-28. Currently more than 98 per cent of eligible bodies are members of our scheme.

We hope to continue to attract strong participation for the benefit of all parties. In particular, we believe that in the current challenging market, large contracts will offer better value and greater certainty to the sector than multiple individual local appointments, as well as avoiding unnecessary costs and inconvenience for both bodies and auditors.

We will issue formal invitations to opt in later in the year. Ahead of that we have launched an important consultation outlining our current thinking on key procurement options and giving local government bodies the opportunity to help shape the national scheme for the next period.

Our draft prospectus is available at bit.ly/3vq9g33. It sets out our early thinking about how we can tackle the challenges ahead, alongside playing our part in helping to develop a more robust and sustainable local audit system.

The consultation will close on 8 July.

Ensuring an effective audit system for the future really matters for the reputation and standing of individual authorities and the sector as a whole. So please do encourage your authority to take part in our consultation and let us have the benefit of your views.



For more information about Public Sector Audit Appointments, please visit www.psaa.co.uk

An army of community support



Cllr **Michelle Bateman** (Ind) is Cabinet Member for Housing at Pembrokeshire County Council

When I was elected to Pembrokeshire's Letterston ward in 2017, my campaign leaflet said we needed "strong, resilient communities". Never has this resilience been tested as much as in the past year.

I'm proud of the villages in my ward because although they are quite different, they are all friendly, thriving, and full of people who make things happen.

Villages are ecosystems that rely on a delicate balance between their residents and their roles within it: the reliable cake makers, the great raffle ticket sellers, the organisers and the stalwarts who quietly take a back seat in planning but diligently attend any community event.

When COVID-19 took hold, it shook up those ecosystems and redefined roles.

Those who previously were busy with jobs found themselves furloughed; those retired residents with bustling social calendars found themselves confined to their houses; and those who were usually the first to offer support to those in need found themselves needing help.

It quickly became clear that a coordinated, intelligence-led, and well communicated response was needed across Pembrokeshire. I had faith and confidence in the people within my ward to step up to the challenge, but when I set up three volunteer groups the response was incredible.

What started as a few Facebook messages offering help almost overnight became a spreadsheet of emails, phone numbers and skills. People weren't just willing to help, they actively wanted to make a difference.

Hundreds of similar groups sprung up across the county. The Pembrokeshire Community Hub was set up by the council and its partners to link the various groups and add resilience to the response – a safety net to ensure anyone who needed it could access help.

But while I and others did collect prescriptions and help with shopping, the level of assistance required was far lower

than expected. Instead, quietly, and without fanfare, people were relying on long-established and successful support networks – the foundations were already there, lying dormant until needed.

Neighbours coordinated shared shopping trips, friends set up WhatsApp groups offering to add items to supermarket deliveries, and people continued to check up on those they were already supporting.

Daily walks became an opportunity to say hello to those we knew might be lonely, and school Facebook groups turned from PE kit reminders to home-school tips.

Social media made information easily accessible, and we saw a digital revolution as people previously slightly

scared of the internet embraced online shopping and Zoom calls.

Local businesses became the heroes, adapting overnight to offer deliveries, covid-secure shopping, food donations or delicious takeaways.

Every prescription or bag of shopping I delivered came with views of rainbows or posters thanking those on whom we relied. There was a new appreciation for our farmers, care workers, refuse collectors, teachers and, of course, the NHS.

We don't know what our communities will look like when we emerge from this pandemic, but I know that my ward is ready to do what it needs to rebuild.

I've learned that people want to be enabled to help themselves, and that at grassroots level, where it really counts, we have an army.

As restrictions lift, my role is changing from response to recovery, which means listening to how our communities have changed, and helping them shape the future that they want.

"People weren't just willing to help, they actively wanted to make a difference"



Drawing the line



Tim Bowden is Secretary to the Boundary Commission for England

What are the ties that bind together your local area? Is it where you send your children to school, or the community groups you attend?

As we reshape the map of parliamentary constituencies in England, we want you to tell us how we can best reflect your local community.

Currently, the number of electors in some constituencies is much higher than in others.

The Boundary Commission for England, an independent and impartial public body, is redrawing constituency boundaries to make sure each has between 69,724 and 77,062 electors (with an exception to that rule for the Isle of Wight).

In doing so, the number of constituencies in England will increase from

533 to 543. The 2023 Review will, therefore, ensure MPs represent roughly the same number of electors in each new constituency.

We know the changes we recommend will be of considerable interest to the local government community. Councils may be asked by local residents or groups how they can provide feedback on the proposed new constituencies. They may also wish to make their own representations.

This is easy to do via our consultation portal, at www.bcereviews.org.uk. Members of the public can view our initial proposals for new boundaries and constituency names, compare them to the existing pattern, and submit their views before the consultation closes on 2 August.

If you are responding on behalf of a local body, you can select this option on the site.

i To find out more about the Boundary Commission for England's 2023 Review, please visit www.bcereviews.org.uk. The Boundary Commission for Wales launched its review in March, see www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk



We have created a partner pack to help you raise awareness of the review within your area and answer any questions you may receive. To download this pack, which includes example posts for social media, an FAQ sheet and more, go to bit.ly/bcepartnerpack.

Your feedback is important. During the last review, we changed more than half of our proposals to reflect local knowledge submitted by the public. It's now over to you to tell us whether your area is best represented in our initial proposals and, if not, how these can be improved.

Support for family relationships



Verity Glasgow is Co-Director of OnePlusOne

The evidence shows that prolonged, unresolved parental conflict can have a long-lasting and damaging effect on children's mental wellbeing, development and long-term life chances. Poor relational capability can lead to unhealthy relationships, contributing to other wellbeing issues, such as stress, ill health and money problems.

Relationships can be complex and some will break down. While there is a high emotional cost incurred by the families affected, there is also a high cost to government for public services to pick up the pieces – estimated at around £51 billion a year by the Relationships Foundation, a think tank.

So it makes good social and economic

sense to support people to develop their relational capability and break the cycle of destructive relationship breakdowns.

Early intervention is crucial. Supporting people to learn vital skills to cope with life's challenges is always more effective than waiting to pick up the pieces after things have gone wrong.

Local councils are best placed to lead this early intervention approach. They understand the needs of their local communities. They



know what works and what doesn't when it comes to providing support to local families.

We are proud to be working with so many local authorities, offering training and access to resources to support those families in need.

Talking about relationships isn't always easy. For many people, there is still stigma and shame attached to relationship breakdown. We'd like to change that by making it easier for people to get help as soon as it's needed.

Local authority staff can support this shift, along with anyone who works with families. This could include councillor surgeries, healthcare providers, and community-run centres.

Our digital resources are an effective way to engage with hard-to-reach parents – particularly younger parents and dads – by offering accessible, non-intrusive ways of helping people help themselves, and providing a stepping stone to further support where needed.

OnePlusOne offers a variety of support to help reduce parental conflict. To find out more, please visit our website.

i OnePlusOne is a charity using the latest relationship research and behaviour change theory to create digital early intervention programmes, see www.oneplusone.org.uk

ELECTIONS



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



The return of the casual vacancy

Council by-elections resumed for English authorities on 6 May, with more than 350 vacancies filled.

Some were combined with scheduled local elections, but in 262 wards, a separate by-election was held.

Vacancies caused by the death of the sitting councillor accounted for 32 per cent of cases. Using council by-elections held during the 2017-19 parliament as a point of comparison, when 30 per cent of vacancies arose because of a death, there does not appear to be a significant increase.

The outcomes in the 6 May by-elections followed the pattern favouring the Conservatives established in the main elections. The party made a net gain of 61 seats to go alongside the 234 gains made in council areas holding elections.

Labour lost 27 seats to the Conservatives and finished with a net loss of 24 seats. This made a final tally of 352 net losses for Labour.

Notwithstanding the Liberal Democrats' spectacular victory in the recent Chesham and Amersham parliamentary by-election, the battle between them and the Greens is bringing some interesting developments.

Both parties fielded a candidate in 121 by-elections, with the Green candidate winning more votes than the Liberal Democrat in 66 of these. The Liberal Democrats received an average of 409 votes in the seats they contested, compared with 349 votes for the Greens.

The Liberal Democrats currently have more councillors than the Greens, but given talk about a so-called 'progressive alliance' it will be interesting to monitor the rivalry between these two parties in future by-elections.

Following the main May elections, there were some reports that, while the Conservative party had consolidated its grip – established in 2019 – across parts

of the Midlands and the North, it was experiencing difficulties in southern England. There is very little evidence in these by-election results to support that thesis.

Indeed, in the 138 contests held in Greater London, acknowledged as one of its weakest regions, the party's vote rose by an average of four percentage points compared with the results in 2018, while Labour's fell by seven points.

Half of June's by-elections arose because of a candidate's death before the May election. The outcome in the two Labour seats for Sewell – one for Norwich, the other for Norfolk – is especially interesting.

The party safely negotiated its defence of the county division, but lost the city ward – which has the same boundary – to the Greens. The same four parties contested both vacancies and it would appear that some Labour county voters used their second vote to favour the Greens.

In a postponed election for Tandridge District Council, Judy Moore unseated the Conservatives to take the Felbridge seat, boosting the Independent/Residents' Association coalition there.

The Liberal Democrats probably held onto their Old Cleeve and District seat in Somerset West and Taunton because local Conservative voters were torn between a choice of two former councillors.

Martin Dewdney and Richard Lillis were both elected as Conservatives for Old Cleeve before West Somerset merged with Taunton Deane, but Lillis contested the 2019 election as an Independent. This time he declined any description on the ballot paper, but still polled 120 votes, with Dewdney falling short by just six votes!



For more details of these and other recent by-election results, please visit www.local.gov.uk/first



Local by-elections

Kent, Elham Valley

CON HELD

13.1% over Green

Turnout 25.5%

Mid Devon, Upper Culm

CON HELD

1.8% over Lib Dem

Turnout 23.9%

Norfolk, Sewell

LAB HELD

5.1% over Green

Turnout 32.6%

Norwich, Sewell

GREEN GAIN FROM LAB

6.3% over Lab

Turnout 32.6%

Somerset West and Taunton, Old Cleeve and District

LIB DEM HELD

0.5% over Con

Turnout 28%

Tandridge, Felbridge

IND GAIN FROM CON

18.1% over Ind

Turnout 31.9%

Waltham Forest, Grove Green

LAB HELD

34.1% over Lib Dem

Turnout 21%

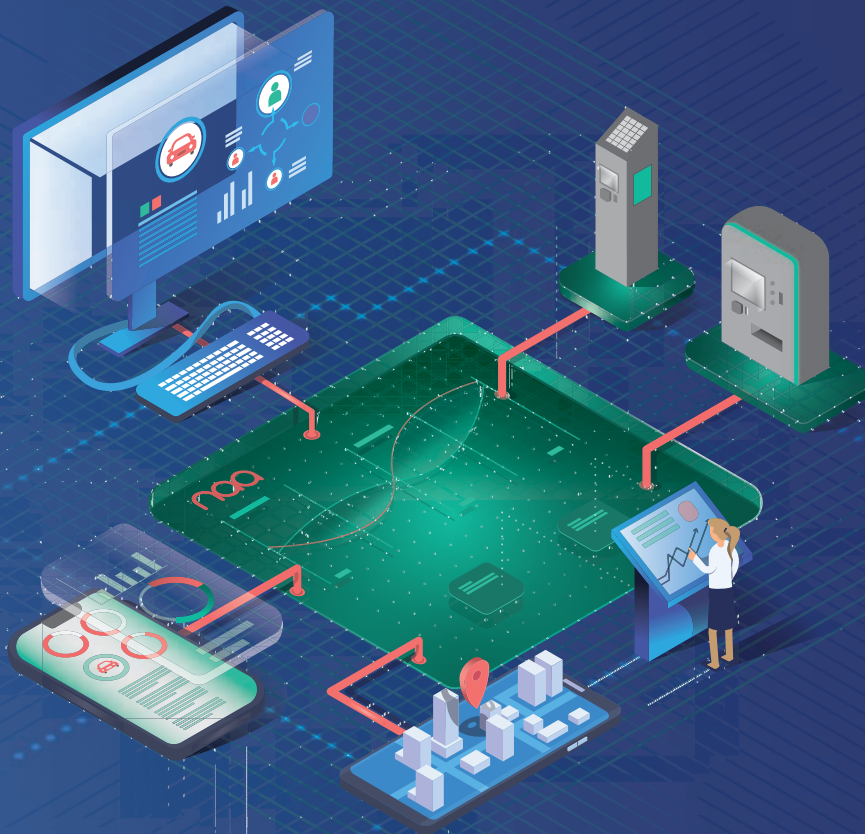
Waltham Forest, Lea Bridge

LAB HELD

31.3% over Ind

Turnout 21%

CALLING ALL FUTURE THINKERS



The notanotherapp open parking payment platform delivers a future ready system that empowers you to initiate effective change.

Delivering multi-vendor cashless providers as well as multi-channel analysis of:

- Pay & Display and Pay On Foot data
- Cashless App & Pre-Booking data
- SMS and Carrier Billing data
- Permit data
- Enforcement data

Plus integration with EV charging, kerbside/bay management and travel management systems.

Evolution is happening, will you be a part of it?