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LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference 2022

On **23–24 March**, the LGA will be hosting its tenth public health conference in partnership with the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH). Over the past decade the conference has been an invaluable opportunity for councillors, chief executives and directors to reflect on how councils can best support the health of their communities.

The virtual conference will be opened by **Professor Chris Whitty**, Chief Medical Officer for England, who will be joined by leading public health experts in a range of sessions over two days exploring the very latest thinking on national policy issues, as well as offering insights from those delivering on the ground.

After an extremely challenging year in which local government continues to be at the heart of responding to the pandemic, this flagship public health conference is more important than ever.

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Life after the pandemic

With almost all coronavirus-related restrictions lifting in England, the LGA has been calling for some outbreak management funding to continue to help councils respond to local outbreaks (p4, p24).

As we learn to live with covid, other issues are coming to the fore. The Government published its levelling up white paper last month, and you can read the LGA's initial response to it in this edition of **first** (p10-11).

We also have a white paper on health and social care integration. The LGA and the NHS Confederation are clear that integration is key to improving the health and lives of our residents, not an end in itself (p9).

Elsewhere in the magazine, we look at issues facing public health (p13) and fire and rescue services (p15), ahead of the LGA's annual conferences on these sectors (see www.local.gov.uk/events).

It's International Women's Day on 8 March, and this year's theme is #BreakTheBias. Councillors from across the political spectrum share their experiences and concerns about the issues they face (p18-19).

And Baroness Wilcox, the first woman leader of the Welsh LGA, shares her thoughts as she prepares to stand down as a councillor at this May's local elections (p23).

Cllr James Jamieson
is LGA Chairman



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Underfunded care reforms ‘a risk to services’

Councils could face a budget black hole this year amid growing concerns about underfunded adult social care reforms, the LGA has warned.

Of the £36 billion the new UK-wide health and social care levy will raise over the next three years, only £5.4 billion is ringfenced for social care in England.

As councils plan their service budgets from April, the LGA said many are increasingly concerned that the funding allocated for reforms falls far short of the likely costs involved.

The introduction of a ‘fair rate of care’ that councils will pay providers and tackling the issue of self-funders paying more for their care than those who access support at the council rate will be particular issues going forward.

Without adequate funding to deliver these proposals, some councils will face a battle to balance budgets, worsening existing pressures and impacting on services.

Even if the reforms were fully funded, adult social care would still face a funding gap for current services, because of inflation and other rising costs.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chair of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said: “There is much to support in the Government’s vision

and proposals, but they run the risk of falling at the first hurdle if they are not matched by the necessary funding to turn them into reality.

“As well as potentially derailing the reforms themselves, inadequate funding also runs the risk of further destabilising existing services, with clear consequences for the ability of people who draw on social care to live the lives they want to lead.

“It’s crucial the Government recognises this, steps up and works with us.

“Unless action is taken, people may experience reductions in quality and availability of care and support services,

while at the same time paying more for them through the new health and social care levy and increased council tax.”

Councils also face a standstill on funding for public health, with the 2022/23 funding settlement providing an extension of their current funding of £3.4 billion – but no real terms increase.

Cllr Fothergill said the settlement was “disappointing” and “runs contrary to our shared ambition with government to address the stark health inequalities exposed by COVID-19”.

● See p8, p9



‘Continue local outbreak funding’ – LGA

The LGA has called for an extension in outbreak management funding following the Government’s announcement of its ‘Living with covid’ strategy.

The strategy signalled the end

to all restrictions in England, with the legal requirement to self-isolate after testing positive being scrapped and the phasing out of free lateral flow tests.

The Government’s Contain

Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), which has provided £400 million in funding to local authorities in England during the pandemic, is set to end this month and no guarantees have been made about its future.

The LGA and the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) are warning that, without an extension of the fund, they may be unprepared to tackle new variants and manage COVID-19 in local schools and care homes because of the loss of staff with relevant expertise.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, warned that councils will have to stand down important

public health services if they do not receive any further local outbreak management funding.

This will not need to be at the scale seen during the pandemic but investment will be vital to retain local capacity to respond to the differential impacts of variants and outbreaks across the country.

Professor Jim McManus, ADPH President, said: “The uncertainty around COMF means capacity is being reduced in local government, leading to a loss of experienced staff and leaving weaker capability at a local level to the detriment of local communities and the health protection system.”

● See p24



Inquiry into levelling up and local leadership

The LGA has launched a 'Levelling up local' inquiry into how the Government's levelling up agenda might better strengthen local communities.

Its independent steering group will look beyond last month's levelling up white paper to investigate the role of local leadership in shaping a post-pandemic recovery that works for all.

It will explore: further opportunities to simplify funding to improve the quality of public services and address deprivation; the role that devolution to democratically elected leaders can play in bringing communities together; how best to improve prosperity, involving local and national government alongside the private and public sector; and the potential of local cultural and other assets to strengthen investment in places.

The inquiry will be co-chaired by Mayor Marvin Rees, Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board, and Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board.

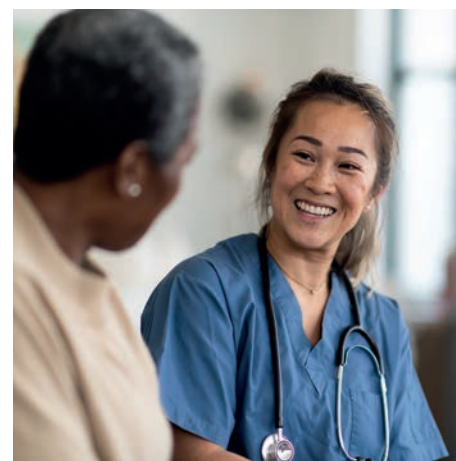
The Government's flagship white paper

set out 12 national 'missions' intended to help level up the UK by the end of the decade – covering pay, productivity, skills, local transport, broadband, school performance, life expectancy, wellbeing, pride in place, home ownership, crime rates, and devolution deals for every area in England that wants one.

LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said: "Levelling up is at the heart of what councils and combined authorities want for their communities and they have a critical role to play in achieving the 12 national missions set out in this wide-ranging white paper.

"The local response to the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated what is possible when central and local government work together towards a shared goal, highlighting the place leadership role councils play in responding to the needs of local communities."

● See www.local.gov.uk/levelling-local-inquiry for more on the LGA's levelling up local inquiry, and p10-11 for its response to the white paper



Integration 'requires resources and commitment'

Adequate resources and a shared long-term commitment by the NHS, ministers and councils will be needed to deliver on government plans for integrating health and care, the LGA has warned.

It said the Government's recently published health and social care integration white paper (see p9) puts people and communities at the centre of integration policy to ensure that everyone gets the right care in the right place at the right time to achieve better health and care outcomes.

The LGA also welcomed the white paper's focus on prevention, but flagged that councils' public health grant has been cut by 24 per cent on a real-terms per capita basis since 2015/16.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "We are pleased to see that the important role councils play in joining up health and care services is recognised in this paper, as well as the focus on prevention and providing care and support to people in community settings.

"The LGA has long argued for a strong role for place-based leadership of care and health. We believe that integrated care systems should develop their place-based arrangements on existing local authority boundaries since many of the components of joined-up working already exist at this level.

"Adult social care is in a fragile position, with councils struggling to balance budgets and services severely impacted by rising costs and recruitment issues.

"A long-term funding solution is urgently needed to ensure a sustainable, high-quality and sufficient care and health workforce to meet needs now and going forward."

'Cuts could fund 1,000 youth workers'

More than 1,000 youth and community support workers could be recruited using money removed from a flagship government fund for youth services, according to new LGA analysis.

It is concerned the Government has reduced its Youth Investment Fund from £500 million to £378 million.

The fund, announced in 2019 and due to be rolled out to 45 councils, is designed to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services. Restoring the £122 million shortfall could pay for around

1,200 full-time youth and community support workers over three years – increasing the overall number by around a third, and helping boost local efforts to support children and young people's growing mental health needs, and tackle increasing rates of knife crime.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils and youth sector partners have been waiting more than two years for the fund, only to find that the original funding commitment is being reduced.

"We are also unconvinced that improving facilities should take greater priority over investing in the staff and youth work programmes that can be transformative to a young person's life. It is important the Government sticks to its original funding commitment and allows councils to invest in hiring hundreds of full-time youth workers.

"As we come out of the pandemic, it is important that young people are able to build high-quality relationships with trusted adults."



In brief

Domestic abuse

The Government has announced a further £125 million to help councils deliver on their duty to provide accommodation-based support and services for domestic abuse victims. Cllr Nesil Caliskan, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, welcomed the funding, saying it would help maintain current service provision, and called for an equal focus on funding for prevention, early intervention, perpetrator programmes, and wider community-based domestic abuse support services. She added: "It is important that government offers clarity on the provision of funding in future years as this would assist councils with their long-term planning and ensure consistency and stability of services."

Hearts for the arts

Unsung council heroes championing the arts against all odds have been recognised in the Hearts for the Arts Awards 2022. A public community poetry project, a campaign to bring footfall back to high streets, and a project using music to grow connections between vulnerable young people and older residents were among this year's winners. Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: "The shortlisted individuals and teams are an inspiration to us all and a reminder of the importance of locally-funded cultural services in engaging people in creativity and achieving wider objectives around levelling up."

Economic growth

A National Audit Office report on supporting local economic growth has flagged how multiple government funding pots and overlapping timescales, combined with competitive funding, create uncertainty for councils. Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "Awarding funding in small pots on a competitive basis has created uncertainty and hindered councils' ability to plan strategically for their communities. The Government must do more to align new funding for economic infrastructure with local capacity, to deliver and co-ordinate long-term interventions at scale. With adequate resources and freedoms, councils can continue to ensure all of our communities are able to prosper in the future."

Bus routes face axe

Essential bus routes may be axed from the end of this month if emergency government support is not extended, councils and bus operators have warned.

Experts are warning of a 30 per cent reduction in existing bus services when current funding support ends.

The LGA, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport, Urban Transport Group and Campaign for Better Transport have called on the Government to urgently extend its Bus Recovery Support Grant.

The grant was introduced last year, providing operators and local authorities with £255.5 million in funding support in response to sharp declines in passenger numbers and revenues.

Current bus passenger numbers outside of London are still 26 per cent lower than before the pandemic. However, the Government has yet to clarify if the grant will be extended beyond the end of March, leading to concerns that a significant

number of routes will not remain viable.

Cllr David Renard, LGA Transport Spokesperson, said: "Councils are working with local operators to continue to deliver lifeline bus services despite the pressures of the pandemic."

"Greater usage of public transport helps to alleviate congestion and reduce harmful emissions in our communities."

"Passenger numbers have not returned to those seen before the pandemic and, without continued support, it is clear that some routes will no longer be viable and will have to be reduced."

"This will have a devastating impact on people who rely on these services to get to work, visit family and access vital services, including doctors and affordable food shopping."

"Saving bus services is good value for money for the Government, the National Bus Strategy and the Treasury, as bringing services and passengers back is harder and more expensive."



Call for tougher rules on gambling

Tougher regulation of the gambling industry is needed to help protect communities and vulnerable people from gambling-related harm, according to the LGA and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

Ahead of a government white paper on a review of the Gambling Act 2005 (see p21), they are calling for greater powers for councils to determine where and how many gambling premises can open locally, alongside a crackdown on the current volume of gambling advertising and marketing, including online.

They also want a mandatory, statutory levy on gambling firms, to replace the current system of voluntary industry donations funding research, education and treatment.

Councils currently have limited powers to prevent the opening of gambling premises

even if there are already others nearby or there are reasons why it may not be an appropriate location – for example, because there are supported housing, treatment centres or schools in close proximity.

Problem gambling can come at significant cost to taxpayers as well as individuals through impacts on crime and health.

Cllr Nesil Caliskan, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Councils are not anti-gambling, but it is time we have a regulatory framework for gambling that above all else prioritises protecting vulnerable people from gambling-related harm and gives powers to local communities."

"The review is a golden opportunity for the Government to implement further measures that empower local communities and their elected representatives."

Surge in children with mental health problems

The LGA has warned of a rise in the number of children with mental health problems seen by social workers, which has surged by a quarter since before the coronavirus pandemic.

Latest figures show 77,390 children were assessed as having a mental health need on 31 March 2021 – amounting to nearly 1,500 children presenting to councils every week.

This is an increase of 25 per cent on the 61,830 seen two years earlier.

The LGA says the figures illustrate the devastating impact of COVID-19 on some young people, with successive lockdowns and school closures harming young people's mental wellbeing and exacerbating existing mental health challenges.

It warns the numbers could continue to increase, underlining the need for children's social care services to be adequately funded as part of a child-centred recovery from the pandemic, and the importance of early intervention to prevent problems escalating.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "As these figures show, hundreds of children every week are seen by social workers because they need help with their mental health and we expect these numbers to grow as the full impact of the pandemic is felt.

"This reinforces the importance of fully

funding the whole system of children's mental health support – including councils and the NHS – to make sure that children get the help they need, when they need it. That includes early help to prevent children reaching crisis point.

"Councils want to be able to provide the very best support for children, which is why we are urging government to work with councils on a child-centred, cross-government pandemic recovery plan that offers the very best future for children and families."



Home schooling register confirmed

The Government has announced it will introduce a register for children not in school, following years of lobbying by the LGA.

Ministers have said they will support councils to make sure they know where every child is being educated, that the education received is of the right quality, and that support is offered to families who choose to home educate.

The LGA has long called for a register of children not in school and for councils to be given the powers to monitor the educational provision being made for a home-educated child.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said:

"It is good the Government has acted on councils' concerns around the increasing number of children receiving an education outside the classroom and missing out on the benefits that a school environment brings, such as safeguarding and learning and socialising with other children.

"While for some children home schooling can be a positive experience, we have long called for a register for all home educators to ensure that children are receiving a suitable education in a safe environment, as well as the tools and flexibilities for councils to check a child's home schooling.

"These will be vital in helping to make sure children aren't being taught in unsuitable or dangerous environments."

In brief

Labour leader to stand down

The LGA's Senior Vice-Chair and Leader of the LGA's Labour Group is to stand down in May.

Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader of Newcastle City Council, lost a contested selection in his Arthur's Hill ward, and has decided to withdraw as a candidate in the local elections.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said:

"Nick has given more than two decades of his life to serving the people of Newcastle. He can be enormously proud of the impact he has had in the city and in his national leadership roles.

"We are hugely grateful to Nick for the outstanding contribution he has made to the LGA. His voice has been significant and influential in very many policy debates with government and helped to secure significant changes for communities across the country.

"He will be sorely missed by the whole local government family and we wish Nick all the best in the future."

Cllr Forbes said he was "immensely proud" of having been Newcastle's first LGBT leader and also its second-longest serving leader. He added: "Above all, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have served my city, the wider local government family and the Labour Party. This I have done to the best of my abilities."

Reform of exempt accommodation needed

Housing charities, frontline organisations and local authorities have united behind the LGA and Commonweal Housing's call on the Government to reform exempt accommodation.

In a letter to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the two organisations have highlighted issues around exploitation of the unregulated exempt system, that result in too many high-need individuals living in cramped and often dangerous housing without the necessary support that should be expected, and which they were often promised.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said that "councils need to have oversight of exempt accommodation, with the powers and resources to crack down on poor providers".

Adult social care reform

Councils stand ready to play their part, but funding issues must be tackled soon

Last year, the Government published its long-awaited adult social care white paper.

The white paper set out a 10-year vision for care and support in England around three key objectives: that people have choice, control and support to live independent lives; they can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support; and that adult social care is fair and accessible.

It was good to see positive language used to describe the importance and value of care and support. However, we continue to be concerned that councils will be unable to play their part in the Government's ambitions if the issue of funding is not tackled soon.

In February, we wrote a letter to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia, detailing our work on supporting people with dementia and our ongoing concerns regarding the stability of the social care workforce.

Supporting people with dementia is not just a health and social care issue. Councils deliver a huge range of services that can have an impact on people with dementia and their carers, including adult social care, public health, housing, leisure, planning, licensing, transport, and children's services. With councils prioritising adult social care above other services in the face of financial pressures, additional support is required to enable councils to do more to develop dementia friendly communities.

Meanwhile, the Government published its new health and social care integration white paper, which aims to bring the NHS and local government closer together to improve care for all and value for money. The plan includes proposals to improve data sharing, introduce personalised care, and strengthen the earlier intervention



It was good to see the positive language used to describe the importance and value of care

support that could prevent diseases from progressing and reduce the need for invasive and expensive interventions late in the day.

The LGA supports the Government's ambition for joining up health and care services to get better outcomes for individuals and communities, and we were pleased to see the role of councils in supporting this work recognised in the paper, as well as the focus on prevention and providing care and support to people of all ages in community settings.

We continue to call for integrated care systems to develop their place-based arrangements on existing local authority boundaries, as many of the

components of joined-up working already exist at this level.

On the legislative front, the Health and Care Bill has been progressing through the House of Lords. We secured a key reform in the opening of the session at committee stage, where the Minister, Lord Kamall, said that, following the "strength of feeling in the House" on the issue of elected councillors being appointed to integrated care boards (ICBs), the Government had made the decision to revise its draft guidance to remove the proposed blanket exclusion of local authority members sitting on ICBs.

This is a helpful recognition that councillors can make a positive contribution to ICBs, bringing a wealth of experience from working in partnership with their communities and other stakeholders on strategic issues. We look forward to moving forward with the development of integrated care systems in this spirit of collaboration.

NHS and political leadership

Integration is not an end in itself – it is key to improving the health and lives of local people



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA and **Lord Adebawale** is Chair of the NHS Confederation



not as an end in itself, but to improve the health of the population and people's lives. In 2016, our two organisations set out their own vision

With the Health and Care Bill (subject to successful Parliamentary passage) set to put integrated care systems (ICSs) on a statutory footing, and the publication of the Government's white paper on integration, now is the time for local political and NHS leaders to grasp this unique opportunity to move integration into the mainstream of our planning and support for people and communities.

The LGA and the NHS Confederation have been at the forefront of championing integration,

of integration:

- Integration will deliver services that are organised and delivered to get the best health and wellbeing outcomes for communities. They will be in the right place, making the most of the strengths and resources in the community.
- Care, support and information will be available at the right time, to avoid escalating ill health, and with the emphasis on prevention. Services will be designed with, and centred on, the needs of the individual, with equitable access for all and making best use of community and voluntary

sector provision. They will also be provided by the right people – professionals working with each other and with citizens, and who enable them to look after their own health and wellbeing.

- Local leaders will, together, do what is best for their citizens and communities ahead of institutional needs. It means directing all of the resources in a place – not just health and care – to improving citizens' wellbeing, and increasing investment on community provision. It also means sharing responsibility for difficult decisions, particularly in securing sustainable and transformed services.

Almost six years on, this remains the vision to which we should all aspire.

We have welcomed the Government's 'light touch' approach in the Health and Care Bill because it recognises that each ICS is different in terms of geography, demography, scale of health and care challenges, configuration of services, and strength of joint working.

But this means that there is no single national blueprint for how ICSs will ensure that they are a partnership of equals between the NHS, local government and their communities.

Each ICS will have an integrated care board (ICB), responsible for joining up NHS organisations to collaborate on delivering better care and support, and an integrated care partnership (ICP) that will develop the overarching strategy to drive a shared vision for joined-up care and support, and improved population health outcomes.

It is imperative that the ICB and the ICP are a partnership of equals, with each playing their vital and distinct roles.

It is equally important for ICSs to work with the place-based partnerships within their wider footprints, to build on the important work of health and wellbeing boards in setting out their place priorities through joint health and wellbeing strategies.

Across the country, leaders of health and care are working at system and place level to turn national policy into local reality.

Nationally, our two organisations are working together to highlight this good practice and support all councils and their NHS partners to make the ambition for joining up health and care a reality for all our communities.



Levelling up for the future

Government's new white paper aims to give power to local authorities to make improvements in their communities

The Government has published its long-awaited levelling up white paper, offering a devolution deal to every part of England that wants one, alongside other proposals for boosting local areas and reducing inequalities by the end of the decade.

Councils and combined authorities will have a critical role to play in achieving the 12 new missions set out in the white paper. These cover four broad areas: boosting productivity and living

standards by growing the private sector; spreading opportunities and improving public services; restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging; and empowering local leaders and communities.

Devolution will be extended beyond metropolitan areas for the first time, with Cornwall; Derbyshire and Derby; Devon, Plymouth and Torbay; Durham; Hull and East Yorkshire; Leicestershire; Norfolk; Nottinghamshire and Nottingham; and Suffolk invited to start formal negotiations to agree new county deals. Negotiations for a mayoral combined authority (MCA) deal will take place with York and North Yorkshire, as well as for an expanded MCA deal for the North East. Other areas in similar situations, such as Cumbria, will have the opportunity to consider the same deal.

Devolution will also be deepened through opening negotiations for trailblazer deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities and by inviting other MCAs to bid for further powers through a new devolution framework.

The framework sets out a flexible, three-level approach to devolution recognising that a one-size-fits-all model would not be suitable. Level 3 is a single institution or county council with a directly elected mayor, across a functional economic area or whole county area. This is the Government's preferred model of devolution, but ministers have been clear that this will not suit all areas at present, and that the framework will instead allow areas to deepen devolution at their own pace.

Quality rented homes

By 2030, the white paper states renters will have a secure path to home ownership, with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas and the number of non-decent rented homes down by half, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas. The LGA said councils want all tenants to be able to live in safe, secure, high-quality housing and that government needs to ensure councils have the ability to establish landlord licensing schemes, as well as sufficient investment and powers to deliver more high-quality, sustainable and affordable homes.

Pride in place

The value of cultural and sporting engagement, alongside heritage, as a key driver of levelling up is recognised, with a £30 million parks fund, a £560 million National Youth Guarantee and increased cultural investment outside of London. While specific funding investments will help locally in restoring a sense of community and local pride, the LGA wants councils to be given the flexibilities to invest in facilities and activities that will make the biggest difference for their communities.



For the LGA's full response to the white paper and information about its 'Levelling up local' inquiry, please visit www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/levelling



It is positive to see devolution being extended beyond England's city regions and further opportunities for MCAs. The LGA is clear that inviting every part of England to experience the benefits of devolution and decide for themselves what they need is crucial to improving opportunities and life chances for people across the country. Councils are keen to go further and faster in ensuring the whole of government takes a 'local first' approach.

The white paper promises a series of next steps, including the establishment of a new body focusing on local government data, and the rolling out of levelling up directors, and a new Levelling Up Advisory Council to provide independent expert advice on its design and delivery.

The Government has also published guidance on the £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), to be distributed by councils, providing information about the aims of the fund and the delivery roles of local partners. This is further confirmation of councils' vital leadership role in bringing partners together, providing greater certainty and freedom to respond to local need, and supporting programmes under the priorities of communities and place, local businesses, and people and skills.



Tackling violence to create safer streets

The white paper includes new measures and further funding packages that will strengthen the work of councils and partners in tackling community safety issues. It also recognises and responds to the LGA's calls for an extension of the Safer Streets Fund, which will allow councils to continue investing in resources to address crime and anti-social behaviour. The LGA believes previous recipients should be allowed to apply for further funding for projects.

Employment and skills

Employment and skills pathfinders, which the LGA has consistently called for, have been announced in the white paper. We look forward to more detail on these, and to working with government to improve the system now, to help people move into work or training. Investment in local skills improvement plans is also mentioned and as these cover technical skills only, the LGA continues to call for restoration to 2010 levels of adult skills funding to Level 2, and for the Multiply adult numeracy programme to be localised.

Healthy life expectancy

Improving public health, supporting people to change their diet and tackling diagnostic backlogs are three components of the white paper's commitment to narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy across the country. Councils want to work with government to 'level up' health inequalities, and the focus must be on reducing poor health outcomes as well as economic imbalances between regions, says the LGA. These include interconnected determinants of health such as improvements in housing, education and employment, as well as ensuring a health-promoting environment. No increase in public health funding for councils runs contrary to addressing the stark health inequalities exposed by the pandemic.

Bus networks

Proposed improvements to bus networks are included in the white paper, including new powers of direction for mayoral combined authorities over key route networks and support for other local transport authorities to access franchising powers to deliver improvements for passengers. Councils will be seeking more clarity on what this renewed emphasis on supporting public transport will mean in practice and how this will be funded. The LGA wants to make sure every community is able to access a local bus service and urges government to plug the £700 million annual funding gap councils faced before the pandemic in providing the concessionary fares scheme.

Gigabit broadband rollout

The white paper states that by the end of the decade the whole of the UK will have gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population. The past two years have shown how access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is an everyday necessity. The LGA is clear that with the right funding and opportunity to work in partnership with government, councils could play a far greater role, targeting communities most in need, driving demand and providing digital upskilling to support the rollout. The Government should empower councils to place a local digital champion in every area to help facilitate delivery and support providers to install gigabit-capable broadband as quickly as possible.

Education investment areas

New 'education investment areas' have been proposed, covering the third of council areas where educational attainment is weakest, while the Government will also consult on moving schools in these areas with successive 'requires improvement' Ofsted judgements into strong multi-academy trusts (MATs), to better access support. The LGA said it is vital that councils and schools are able to work with government towards ensuring pupils make up for lost learning and can provide holistic support, including for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as allow councils to set up their own MATs.



NGDP: Supporting the next generation

Councils urged to sign up to flagship training programme to find new talent

The National Graduate Development Programme (also known as the NGDP) is the LGA's flagship management trainee programme and is the only national graduate programme specifically designed for local government.

It offers councils a unique opportunity to grow their own leaders of the future.

Every year, the NGDP provides the sector with high-quality graduates ready to work on strategic projects that contribute to the delivery of your council's goals. The NGDP acts as an opportunity for talented graduates to fast-track their local government career and gives councils the opportunity to nurture and develop their own talent.

How does the NGDP work?

By signing up to the NGDP, councils can access a pool of talented,

dedicated graduates to help solve local issues and deliver the vital services on which residents rely.

Councils are able to choose and employ suitable graduates, who will then undertake a minimum of three placements in different areas across the council. Graduates, who are available to be picked, will have gone through a rigorous assessment process, ensuring councils get access to only the best candidates.

Alongside employment, the LGA provides a prestigious complementary learning and development offer to help graduates implement their learning while working on real projects.

At the end of the two-year programme, those taking part will have developed a range of skills across a variety of services and will be ready to tackle any challenge.

Why choose the NGDP?

The NGDP is flexible to councils, making it easy to shape the programme in a way that both meets their needs and provides a brilliant experience for graduates.

The programme helps councils to develop talent within the existing workforce, recruit talented graduates

They've brought enthusiasm and great ideas for our services. By picking very different people in the first two years we've been able to give them the widest exposure across the council

– Horsham District Council

The programme has offered us an opportunity to re-engage and an opportunity for graduates to fast-track their career within local government, fill gaps in key parts of the organisation and recruit talented graduates, including from the local area

– Sheffield City Council

The NGDP recruitment process is really helpful for councils...you can be confident that, at the final interview stage, you're speaking with some really great individuals

– Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

from the local area who may have otherwise moved away, fill gaps in key parts of the organisation and, most importantly, helps recruit for the future.

Now approaching its 20th anniversary, the NGDP has been key, year in, year out, in supporting local government to find the next generation of talent and has recently been recognised, reaching number 50 in The Times Top 100 graduate employers list.

How to get involved

Councils have until 31 March to sign up to the NGDP. We are encouraging councils that are interested to have an initial chat with the team before going through the sign-up process to ensure the NGDP is suited to your council. You can email the team at ngdp@local.gov.uk or visit our website for more information: www.local.gov.uk/ngdp-councils

Positive about public health

Transferring public health to councils has created huge opportunities to improve community wellbeing



Councillor
David Fothergill
is Chairman of the
LGA's Community
Wellbeing Board

The years of COVID-19 have been tumultuous and devastating, with public health at the centre of measures to tackle the pandemic nationally and locally.

Our admiration for the way public health, wider council colleagues, the NHS and amazing volunteers have worked tirelessly to reduce its impact is unbounded.

As is widely recognised, the pandemic has brought us closer

together. We have experienced the value of partnerships, where organisational badges no longer matter.

We must now make this the basis of our future collaboration across systems, places and neighbourhoods.

Whenever there has been time and space, directors of public health and councils have looked to recovery and renewal – to how the impact of COVID-19 on health and wellbeing can be addressed.

There is growing evidence of significant harm to our mental and physical health, particularly for those facing inequalities, and children and young people whose lives and education have been limited.

Despite this, directors of public health and elected members remain relentlessly positive about the potential to make a difference.

We know how work to protect and improve health and wellbeing has expanded greatly since the transfer of public health responsibilities to local councils, and how local councils and

partners now provide a comprehensive range of measures across all areas of public health.

Bringing public health back into local government in 2013 was never a 'drag and drop' exercise. It was, and continues to be, about improving health for all citizens by building a new and enhanced locally led 21st-century public health system, where innovation is fostered and promoted, accountable to local populations, and supported by the expertise of professionals and key partners.

The transfer remains one of the most significant extensions of local government powers and duties in decades.

It has created huge opportunities for local authorities, with their partners, to make a stronger impact on improving the health of local communities, and helped to rightly reframe public health to a social, rather than medical model of health and wellbeing.

Improved outcomes for citizens must continue to be the focus for any future plans for public health reform and we must ensure we build on the strong foundations we have.

Since 2013, councils have generated many innovations in commissioning and delivery: a clearer focus on prevention in tobacco control, not just treatment; reshaping the health visiting and school nursing strategies to respond better to local needs; and remodelling sexual health provision to improve access and focus on prevention.

As we move to a phase of COVID-19 recovery, the task ahead will not be easy, but we are building on 10 successful years of public health in local government and strong collaboration with key partners.

As public health and councils grow together, policies develop and opportunities emerge.

When partnerships choose a manageable number of priorities and follow through with sustained, consistent action over years, then success follows.

Resources are extremely limited, and every action needs to have maximum impact on health and wellbeing.

There is still much more to be achieved. But with a growing understanding of the vital importance of the nation's health, and a commitment to improving health and wellbeing for those most at risk, we can be optimistic that public health will continue to grow in confidence and effectiveness in the decades to come.



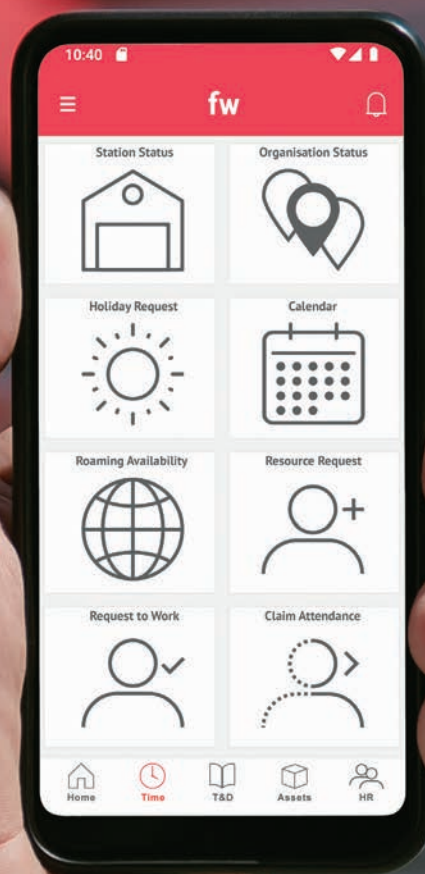
Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, will be among the speakers at the LGA's annual public health conference, taking place virtually from 23-24 March. See www.local.gov.uk/events to find out more and book your place



FireWatch, Prevent + Protect and your Mobilisation System can integrate to provide a connected workspace - with Cloud, Mobile and Microsoft Teams options now included! Get in touch to learn more or book an online demo.

www.firewatch.co.uk/demo

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LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

15-16 March 2022, Hilton Hotel
Newcastle Gateshead

The Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is a key event in the calendar for senior officers and members of fire and rescue authorities.

The fire and rescue sector has played a critical role in the ongoing pandemic response whilst continuing to deliver the core functions that keep our communities safe. The 2022 LGA Fire Conference provides an opportunity to consider key strategic and practical developments that can be expected to impact the fire and rescue sector over the next year.

To book your place visit: www.local.gov.uk/events





Councillor **Ian Stephens** is Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee

Delivering transformation

The latest round of inspections of fire and rescue services highlights many areas worthy of praise

Last December, Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, published his third and final report into the state of the sector. The report detailed the inspectorate's conclusions following its latest round of inspections of 13 fire and rescue services.

Some areas were highlighted as real strengths of the sector, while there were others where the inspectorate felt more work was needed to improve.

People have a right to be safe and to feel safe in their homes

We were pleased that the report acknowledged the crucial role that the fire and rescue service plays in keeping our communities safe, whether that is through responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, or tackling fires or other emergencies.

People have a right to be safe and

to feel safe in their own homes, so we were also glad to see recognition of the crucial building safety work that fire and rescue services are carrying out.

The work of the LGA, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the National Fire Chiefs Council in producing a Core Code of Ethics was also praised.

The ethical principles of the code are that services: put their communities first; act with integrity; treat people with dignity and respect; have accountable, flexible and positive leadership; and promote and recognise the value of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that the Core Code of Ethics is embedded and work is taken forward across the sector.

The inspectorate highlighted that the services they had visited were better at promoting a positive professional culture, and that staff wellbeing and health and safety were being prioritised. Further work was needed on EDI, however. This is particularly important, with the inspectorate highlighting in the

'State of fire and rescue' report that there is a "woeful lack of representation of both women and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds".

The LGA will be continuing to support the EDI Member Champions' Network, to drive improvements in the sector.

The inspectorate outlined a range of other areas in which they felt further work was required, including the need for operational independence for chief fire officers and consideration of reform of the pay machinery, as well as what role the sector should have going forward.

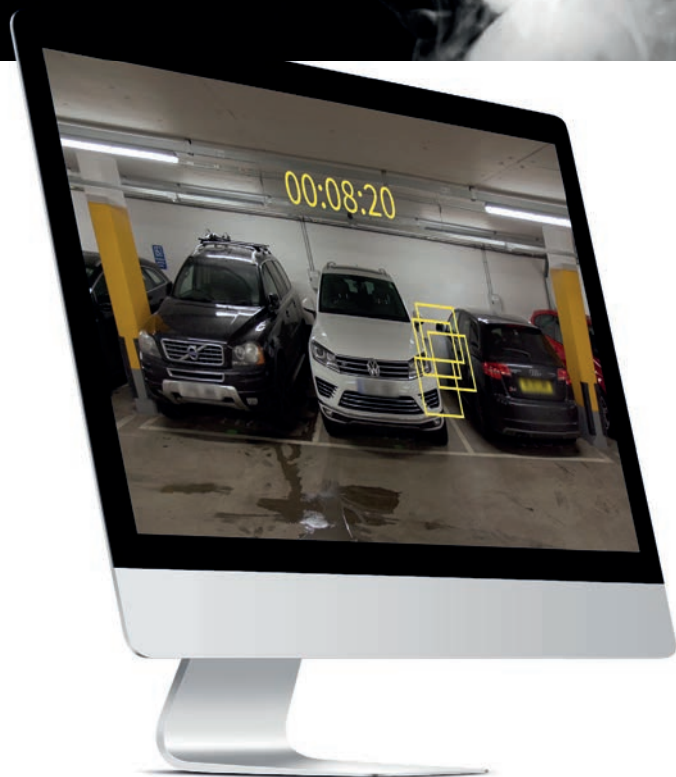
The LGA's annual fire conference, in Gateshead from 15-16 March, will explore some of these issues in more depth. Sir Tom will be speaking, as will Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, the Fire Minister, to discuss the Government's fire reform programme.

The theme of the conference will be 'Delivering transformation' and there will be plenaries on the different areas of inspection, including people, effectiveness and efficiency, and a session on building safety.

There will also be workshops on governance, sector-led improvement and climate change, among other topics. You can book your place on the LGA's website, see www.local.gov.uk/events.



Detect smoke or fire in seconds



Highlight's Smoke and Fire Early Warning System, S.A.F.E. uses advanced AI technology to automatically detect smoke or fire in seconds, sending audio and visual alerts instantaneously so you can prevent fire devastation.

See a video demonstration of the S.A.F.E. system on our website www.highlightparking.co.uk



+44 (0) 20 8769 7730



[highlightparking.co.uk](http://www.highlightparking.co.uk)



S.A.F.E. and secure

Highlight Parking has launched its AI-powered Smoke and Fire Early Warning System (S.A.F.E.), which detects smoke or fire within a few seconds

Why S.A.F.E.?

One particular fire that made the news was at Kings Dock multi-storey car park, at the Liverpool Echo Arena, on New Year's Eve 2017. By the time the fire service had been alerted, the fire had been burning for 13 minutes, and, despite their quick response, it was too late: 1,200 vehicles were destroyed, and the insurance bill was a massive £20m. Thankfully, nobody was injured.

It was this fire that inspired Highlight Parking to begin developing S.A.F.E., to help prevent similar events in the future, not just in multi-storey car parks, but in any large commercial or public building.

"We developed S.A.F.E. because conventional fire systems in car parks are

based on heat detection, which means a fire may already be out of control before the alarm is raised, as was the case at Kings Dock," explains David Harrison, MD of Highlight Parking.

"Obviously, fire safety is extremely important to car park operators, and chief fire officers cite speed of response as critical when it comes to preventing a fire disaster such as the one in Liverpool. S.A.F.E. provides this."

How it works

S.A.F.E. works with around-the-clock, unattended monitoring detecting the presence of any smoke within seconds. Connected to a cloud application, S.A.F.E. immediately triggers a visual and audible

alert, with email/SMS warnings sent automatically to smart devices and to control-room screens. Its AI capability means that smoke can be detected as fast as with the human eye, rather than waiting for flames to reach the car park's ceiling-mounted fire-wire detectors. The outcome is that emergency measures can be put into practice far more quickly, so the likelihood of serious damage or injury is reduced dramatically.

S.A.F.E. in action

FTSE 100 company Severn Trent Water, in Coventry, has implemented the S.A.F.E. solution at its headquarters' multi-storey car park. With 15,000 employees, it is no surprise that health and safety is of paramount importance to the organisation.

Richard Carney, Project Manager at Severn Trent, says: "The S.A.F.E. system was a guaranteed investment for us. We did, of course, have a fire alarm system in the car park, but, S.A.F.E. provides a far quicker response; we timed it at between seven and eight seconds compared with 12 minutes for our existing system."

Not just for car parks

While S.A.F.E. has been developed for car parks, its AI software can be implemented in any space where there is a significant fire risk, such as warehouses, storage facilities, retail, and other large buildings. The system can be installed by uploading Highlight's proprietary S.A.F.E. software to an existing or new CCTV camera system.

Using its AI technology, Highlight can also develop specialist, bespoke solutions for any internal or external monitoring or information gathering.



For more information, visit highlightparking.co.uk or call 020 8769 7730

Party cultures matter



Councillor **Georgia Taylor** is Co-Leader of the Green Party Group at East Sussex County Council

Am I imagining things, or are all the women councillors on the Zoom call either silent or, when they do speak, starting with “I might be wrong”, or “I don’t know much about this topic”?

It is May 2021 and I have just been elected, one of four Greens, and three of us are women. I find myself also using this litany of low-status signalling. I am new to this council-ing business after all, surely I know nothing, despite a successful international career working with governments and civil society all over the world?

Or could it be that the male-dominated culture in this council is slowly infiltrating my steady core?

My council has 50 councillors and 25 per cent of us are women (and not one woman of colour), up from 18 per cent pre-2021 – but still hardly near the 50:50 that we crave, and well below the 36 per cent of all UK local authority councillors.

I looked into the gender balance of local candidates by political party, and it did not look good – ranging from 18 per cent (Con) to 40 per cent (Lib Dem) and 50 per cent (Green). There are different party cultures around inclusion and diversity, but it is not just at election time that it matters – it is all the time.

Women and people of colour are more likely to join political parties and put themselves forward as candidates when they feel like they belong, are being listened to and have a legitimate place.

It’s not enough to just have the candidates – organisations have to change completely.

We need a meaningful gender mix and greater diversity overall to be at our best, and to build the regenerative culture and circular wellbeing economy that we need to thrive over the next few decades. Let’s start now.



Break the bias

Councillors reflect on International Women’s Day

After last May’s local elections, The Fawcett Society estimated it would be 2077 before gender equality would be achieved on local councils in England.

Women make up only around 35 per cent of all councillors in England, and account for just 17 per cent of local authority leaders. The local government workforce is predominantly female (78 per cent), while only 33 per cent of council chief executives are women.

With International Women’s Day taking place on 8 March, **first** spoke to women councillors across the political spectrum about the issues they and their residents face, and what councils can do about them (see below, left and right).

The LGA provides a range of support to councils and political organisations looking to increase the diversity of people elected to local government, particularly through its Be a Councillor campaign (see p20 and www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor). It also offers training and networking opportunities for councillors, including an e-learning platform (see bit.ly/3h8CfE0) and a women councillors’ development day, taking place via Zoom on 26 March. Please email helen.reeves@local.gov.uk to find out more and book a place.

In the face of continuing abuse and intimidation of councillors, and particularly women councillors, the LGA and its sister LGAs in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland also continue to campaign for civility in public life (see www.local.gov.uk/civility-public-life).

i See www.internationalwomensday.com for more on International Women’s Day.

The temerity of women



Councillor **Joanne Harding** (Lab) is Executive Member for Adult Social Care at Trafford Council

Over the years, I have often observed the hesitation and self-doubt that women have when they are considering standing for a role.

“Am I really political enough?”

“That person seems more qualified than I am.”

“Can I really fit this around my family?”

I recognise that each of these has applied to me at one time or another.

It doesn’t appear to work that way at all for ambitious men. It’s almost like these roles are theirs for the taking. No hesitation, no self-doubt.

While there have been many advances that have enabled women to progress in senior business and public sector roles, the

Women in the criminal justice system



Councillor **Ayesha Azad** (Con) is Leader of Woking Borough Council

Women are in a minority in the criminal justice system, making up just 5 per cent of the prison population.

In a system designed for the majority, it is often women who are neglected and marginalised in prisons. The distinct needs of women going through the criminal justice system are seldom recognised, let alone addressed.

In the UK, most women are imprisoned for petty, non-violent offences. Many have dependent children; an estimated 17,000 children are affected by maternal imprisonment every year. The impact on their children can be lifelong and the cost to wider society huge.

To address some of these issues, the role of women's support centres (WSCs) is vital. They work with women whose lives are affected by the criminal justice system.

This work involves helping, counselling, advising and nurturing women who have frequently experienced discrimination and deprivation, often at the hands of their husbands/partners or their family, even before entering the criminal justice system.

The women's support centre in Woking works in partnership with Woking Borough Council. As a local council leader, I believe harnessing the knowledge and expertise of voluntary organisations, such as the WSC, helps to alleviate wider societal issues if tackled early on.

By councils and voluntary organisations coming together to recognise and address the needs of these women, with the aim of reintegrating them back into the community, the ripple effect is extraordinary and hugely impactful – helping the women and their families, but also the wider community.

Do more than just listen



Councillor **Sophie Thornton** (Lib Dem) was elected to Sheffield City Council in May 2021

From a young age, I was told when walking alone to call a friend, stick to main roads, wear comfortable shoes, always check behind you, and to hold my keys between my knuckles. This might sound unnecessary or strange to some, but to me it is second nature – and this experience is what I relayed when I first stood up to speak as a newly elected member of Sheffield City Council last year.

Reflecting on my first nine months as a councillor, and as we approach International Women's Day, there have been many moments that stand out.

The highlight, however, must be when a group of young women, Our Bodies Our Streets (OBOS), brought a petition to council

about improving lighting in public spaces to help women feel safer walking alone.

The 'floodlit effect' of harsh, white lighting causes sharp drop-offs in visibility beyond paths. OBOS presented ideas for warm, layered, inclusive lighting solutions – and it's a move more local authorities can listen to and learn from.

Clearly, however, not everyone wants to listen. OBOS created an installation to promote women's safety in the city's Ponderosa Park. The sculpture was unveiled last July and sadly burnt down less than a month later.

As local councillors, we do not have all the answers. Even as a young woman, I don't. The OBOS petition was a brilliant example of what we can do to listen – but in my nine months as a councillor so far, that new lighting in Ponderosa Park is still not in place.

Women are told often that we are being heard, but actions speak much louder than words.

same cannot always be said about politics.

Standing for office involves the navigation of arcane party processes and there are opportunities for others not to 'play nice' with anyone not part of the 'in group'.

We lack the HR policies and procedures that help protect women in the workplace, for example. It can appear a very male-dominated arena by which too many women feel daunted.

When women do put themselves forward, there may even be rumblings of 'who does she think she is?'

That's why, with International Women's Day's #breakthebias theme, I am even more determined than ever to support women to get involved in politics.

I am asking those women (and men) already actively involved as councillors and MPs to pledge to start conversations early when you see a promising woman with political ambitions.

Tell her yes, she can. Look out for her, take her under your wing. Encourage her to question, take part in political discussions, help her navigate.

And ask her to stand.

Support for disabled councillors

The LGA is producing a new package of support for disabled candidates and councillors, and for councils



Councillor **Judi Billing** is Lead Member for Leadership on the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Councillors make a huge difference to the quality of life of local people and how local issues are dealt with. However, local councils can only be as effective, relevant and vibrant as the people elected to run them, so we need councillors who are capable, committed and fully engaged at the local level.

We need people from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect the communities they serve – but, at the moment, there are many faces missing.

Becoming a councillor is a rewarding and privileged form of public service. As councillors, we are in a position to make a difference to the quality of people's daily lives and to their prospects.

Starting on the route into elected

office can be daunting, particularly if you feel you face barriers in taking part fully in your community. The LGA's Be a Councillor campaign supports councils to engage underrepresented groups and is committed to improving the diversity of local government at all levels.

In response to the Government's National Disability Strategy, the LGA is refreshing the Be a Councillor campaign and creating a new programme of leadership development and support for disabled councillors, including:

- A new Be a Councillor guide for potential candidates, answering the more complicated questions and providing information to support disabled people who are interested in becoming councillors.
- A checklist for councils, helping to proactively embed reasonable adjustments across the organisation.
- A new leadership development programme, ringfenced for disabled councillors, running on top of our existing leadership development programmes, which are open to everyone.

In addition, if you are an existing councillor with a disability, we are relaunching our one-to-one coaching offer and ringfencing this for disabled councillors.

The coaching will be focused on personal leadership development and is open to councillors from any political party, including Independents.

There is no eligibility criteria – it's for councillors at any stage of their political career – and any councillor who identifies as having a disability

Starting on the route into elected office can be daunting

can benefit. For more information or to book, please contact **grace.collins@local.gov.uk**.

So, if you are a disabled councillor, or are looking to improve the representation of disabled people in your council, the LGA has a variety of support already available, with lots of useful and exciting things to come. Watch this space!

i For more on Be a Councillor, please visit www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor



Licensing for recovery



From taxis to gambling, the LGA has been lobbying for improvements to licensing



Councillor **Jeanie Bell** and Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** are LGA Licensing Champions and members of its Safer and Stronger Communities Board



information about drivers seeking a licence in their areas. This will support the work of councils to ensure anyone using a taxi or private hire vehicle is kept safe.

The bill aims to build on work carried out by the LGA to address the issue of taxi drivers losing a licence in one area, then applying for a licence in another area without declaring their previous licensing history.

We were delighted that Peter Gibson MP, who is sponsoring the bill, was able to speak at the LGA's annual licensing conference in February, and provide an update on this crucial work.

It was encouraging that he spoke positively about the LGA's National Register for Refusals and Revocations, which we hope will be the designated database for this bill.

The conference gave delegates an opportunity to reflect on some of the key developments that can be expected to affect councils' licensing committees and teams over the next year. There was a wide range of expert speakers, who covered issues including licensing and counterterrorism, animal licensing, and vulnerability in the night-time economy.

Among them was Gambling Minister Chris Philp MP, who provided delegates with an update on the Gambling Act review.

We are not expecting the outcome of the review until the spring. However, the LGA is continuing to lobby on our long-standing asks around the need for greater powers for councils to approve or reject applications for local premises, as well as raising concerns about the aim to permit.

We hope the review will give councils the flexibility to reach the right decisions for their areas.

Supporting the recovery from the pandemic was another focus of the conference. Cllr Bell spoke alongside Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock, from Westminster City Council, about how licensing can support local businesses to recover from the pandemic.

We referenced the pavement licensing regime as being a great help to the hospitality sector in generating additional income to help them recover from the effects of the pandemic.

The LGA has been in conversations with government about the pavement licensing regime, and our lobbying has been instrumental in securing new burdens funding for councils.

We are now looking ahead to what the long-term future of the pavement licensing regime might be, and will continue to push for a scheme that meets the needs of residents and councils, as well as local businesses.

In other licensing news, the LGA is updating its support offer to help councils with the process of inducting new members onto licensing committees.

We are refreshing our licensing e-learning module, which will provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of a member of a licensing committee. This should be ready after the May local elections, so please look out for that.

We will also be developing some short videos to accompany this, in which we cover some different licensing scenarios for councillors to work through.

This year is already shaping up to be another significant one in licensing, with important announcements expected in key areas.

In taxi licensing, the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill is making its way through Parliament.

The LGA supports this bill, which would make it mandatory for licensing authorities to access vital background



For more information about the LGA's licensing work, please email jade.hall@local.gov.uk

Building online services for everyone

When it comes to their websites, councils should think about embedding accessibility best practices into their processes



Stephen Bowen is Digital Innovation and Delivery Manager at Runnymede Borough Council

We've worked hard to build a new website for our residents. Since its launch in August last year, we've gone from strength to strength in making our services accessible for all.

Building an accessible website is an ongoing process. It's not something that can be achieved overnight, but with planning and coordination it can make a big difference to residents' online experience.

Like many local authorities, we

spent time digesting the accessibility legislation and The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), analysed our content and reviewed accessibility issues. Our main objective has not just been to meet these standards, but also to build a website for everyone.

Our main objective has been to build a website for everyone

A web governance tool allowed us to audit our site and receive a complete inventory and report of our web pages, documents, and more. This outlined all the accessibility issues on our old website and gave us a benchmark from which to start.

When the time came to build our new website, we decided to work with platform specialists Jadu. Our project team was able to run regular tests on the new website templates, homepage widgets and the content that had been migrated. This helped us to understand where accessibility improvements were required.

With WCAG 2.2 around the corner, we are already reviewing our templates and homepage widgets to ensure they continue to be accessible, and update them where required.

It is important that councils think about embedding accessibility best practices into their processes, rather than running a one-off accessibility sprint.

For example, we are now looking to build on our Accessibility Champions group across the council to continue to raise awareness of accessibility. We are also looking to improve our process for requesting documents in alternative formats, and customising our online forms to allow for nominated friends and family to complete online services on behalf of residents.

Five top tips when improving your website

1 Use internal expertise

We tapped into our internal expertise, with our digital team leading the way when it came to web copy and documents being compliant.

2 Review your PDFs

We discovered at the start of the process that we had 3,500 PDFs, many of which had multiple accessibility issues.

We worked with service areas to delete old PDFs or convert them into web pages. While PDFs can be improved, web pages will always be

more accessible and require less effort for web editors to keep compliant.

3 Think about colour contrast

Many councils have a corporate style guide that is often used for the website template designs and colour pallet.

Be sure to check the colour contrast of your website colour pallet before signing this off for elements of your web design. There are lots of tools available; we found the WebAIM contrast check useful.

4 Test your plug-ins

CookiePro offered us the ability to

easily customise our banner and add the source code, and was completely accessible. Not all cookie banners or plug-ins are accessible, so a top tip is to test the product using a free trial to make sure it meets all your requirements.

5 Build accessibility into your council

Train website publishers to recognise basic accessibility issues, and incorporate quick accessibility checks into their processes. Ensure technical teams automate accessibility testing into their deployment process – this can make a big difference.



Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab) is an LGA Vice-President and former Leader of the Welsh LGA

The year 1997 was a very good one.

It marked the start of a Labour government again after 18 years of Tory rule, and it was the time I decided not to prevaricate any longer and rejoin the Labour Party to become active in local politics again.

Over the next few years, I took on various roles within the party. In 2004, I combined my public service role as a teacher with that of a local councillor by winning the seat of the Gaer ward at Newport City Council. I subsequently won a further three elections.

In 2016, I became the first female leader of Newport City Council and, in May 2017, I led the Newport Labour Group to victory, winning 31 of 50 seats at the council.

In June 2017, I became the first female leader of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the body representing all councils in Wales. I also represented Wales as a member of the LGA Executive in London.

I was appointed to the House of Lords

in October 2019, as part of the dissolution honours list of outgoing Prime Minister Theresa May, and was recommended to her by the First Minister of Wales.

I am now a full-time working peer, sitting on the Labour benches in the House of Lords. In March 2020, I was appointed as an Opposition Whip, joining the local government team in the Lords, and, in September 2020, I was appointed Shadow Spokesperson for Women and Equalities. In March 2021, I was appointed as Shadow Spokesperson for Wales and the Education Whip.

My experience as a councillor has been invaluable preparation for Westminster, as I have first-hand experience of putting policies into practice at grassroots level.

I believe that local government is the bedrock of our democracy, and nothing underlines it more than the way in which councils have been such a valuable source of delivery during the pandemic.

I know that my colleagues in Wales have worked extremely closely with the

Welsh Government and this example could, and should, have been more closely followed in England.

I've seen many changes in almost 20 years of frontline local politics.

It's extremely gratifying to have been part of a movement for change in making our councils in Wales more representative of the communities they serve.

Last year, on the eve of International Women's Day, the WLGA Council endorsed a series of significant recommendations from a cross-party working group, which included the use of voluntary quotas, local targets, and council declarations to become 'Diverse Councils'.

This was as a result of the setting up of a cross-party working group on underrepresented groups, under my leadership of the WLGA, and I was pleased to chair it until November 2019, when its initial proposals were delivered to the WLGA Council.

I now co-chair a similar working party with my colleague Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, set up by the Co-operative Party to bring the idea of diverse councils to English councils.

As I leave local government this May, it is one of my proudest achievements, and it augurs well for more balanced council chambers in future years.

My experience as a councillor has been invaluable preparation for Westminster

Thinking beyond the pandemic



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

Since the last edition of **first**, we have had the publication of both the levelling up white paper and the health and care integration white paper.

With the publication of 'Levelling up the UK' and its 12 quantifiable 'missions', which are to be achieved by 2030, we can now fully explain to the communities and people that we represent exactly what this agenda means for them.

Within the document's 332 pages, there are a number of proposals and initiatives that are particularly welcome from a local government perspective.

For example, the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the successor to

EU structural funding, and the confirmation that it will be distributed by councils, will, I believe, enable truly local decision-making and the better targeting of priorities, which I hope will lead to visible improvements to the places where people work and live.

Similarly, I welcome the proposals for 55 'education investment areas', recognition of the LGA's call for employment and skills pathfinders, a commitment to having nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage by 2030, and an extension of the Safer Streets Fund, to give just a few examples of the many ambitious proposals contained in the white paper.

Meanwhile, it was good to see the health and care integration white paper recognise the key role that councils play in joining up health and care services, while also having a strong focus on prevention and providing care and support to people in community settings.

Having long argued for place-based leadership of care and health, I will continue to work with the Government to ensure that councils have the resources and capacity to deliver integration, better outcomes and improved services for our communities.

Following two years in which both the Government and the nation have understandably been focused on COVID-19, the publication of these important white papers allows us to start thinking beyond the pandemic and envisage how we can now begin to build back better.

"The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will enable truly local decision-making and better targeting of priorities"



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

Living with covid

The requirement for people who test positive for COVID-19 to self-isolate has ended, with people expected to take personal responsibility if they may have the virus, as part of government plans to phase out all legal restrictions in England over the coming weeks.

Local authorities will continue to manage local outbreaks of COVID-19 in high-risk settings, as they do with other infectious diseases.

We know that councils and directors of public health are continuing to work tirelessly to keep communities safe and to manage service pressures, including critical staff shortages, particularly in social care and public health.

With the removal of national COVID-19 regulations in England, we are promoting the vital role council-led local public health provision has had over the past two years, and the significant work we will be undertaking in the coming months on areas including vaccine uptake.

We are making the case to



government that councils need continued support, including with staffing cover across key frontline services, while rates of transmission remain high and service delivery challenges continue.

We are also seeking urgent clarity on whether much-needed outbreak management funding – which has helped councils to reduce the spread of the virus – will be extended beyond March, to ensure areas can continue to drive down the virus and protect vulnerable communities.

As national systems are scaled back, it's important that local public health teams still have the tools they need to respond to new variants and tackle

outbreaks, particularly in higher risk settings.

This won't require the same level of funding as the Government has provided so far, but an extension of part of the funding is vital so councils can continue this work and ensure staff with expertise in this area are retained.

I would also like to pass on my thanks to Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader of the LGA's Labour Group since 2015, and of Newcastle City Council since 2011, who will be standing down at the May elections. He has been a good colleague, working constructively across party for the benefit of councils and our residents. This is a sad loss to all of local government and we wish him well for the future.



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

Helping families with soaring living costs

No councillor can fail to have seen how many local families are struggling with the soaring cost of living, whichever part of the country they represent.

In April, most families will be facing a perfect storm of soaring energy prices, rising inflation, and the extra burden of Conservative hikes to both National Insurance and council tax. Many will struggle to pay the bills – and Chancellor Rishi Sunak's thin package of support simply does not go far enough for most.

Forcing every household into an extra £200 debt via energy bills is just storing up trouble for the future.

And even the £150 rebate on council tax for households in Bands A to D will barely touch the sides – not least as the average Band D bill has gone up by £227 in the past three years alone.

The decision to offer a rebate through the council tax system rather than through HMRC leaves many people out in the cold, and all councils with an administrative headache they could do without.

“It will be left to councils to do their best to step in where the Government has failed”

So, as usual, it will be left to councils to do their best to step in where the Government has failed and offer extra help to those most vulnerable.

Labour councils are doing their bit: from Blackburn with Darwen's household support scheme, which aims to help families with their utility bills, to Waltham Forest's creation of a £250,000 winter fund, Labour in local government is filling the gaps.



Councillor **Joe Harris**
is Leader of the LGA's
Liberal Democrat Group

Government plans to tackle sewage stink

Water companies pumped polluting and harmful raw sewage into water sources more than 400,000 times in 2020, according to Environment Agency data.

Late last year, the Rivers Trust revealed that more than half of England's rivers were failing to pass cleanliness tests due to water companies' actions.

“Pumping raw sewage into our treasured rivers and lakes is disgraceful”

However, the Government is proposing taxpayers foot the bill for sewage system improvements, instead of water companies.

The Lib Dem 'sewage tax' would tax water company profits, which last year reached £2.2 billion (pre-tax), despite companies polluting Britain's rivers with sewage.

The proposal would be a 16 per cent tax on pre-tax profits, providing a £340 million fund to fix the sewage system – in addition to the current 19 per cent rate of corporation tax.

For example, Southern Water, which makes the most profit in England, would have paid £70 million in 2020.

Thames Water, the company which made £434 million pre-tax profit in 2020, would also pay £70 million in sewage tax.

Pumping raw sewage into our treasured rivers and lakes is disgraceful, particularly when these companies are raking in millions of pounds in profits. The whole thing stinks.

Why should taxpayers be left to foot the bill for water companies which have shown utter disregard for our local environments?

The Government's plan to introduce a new 'duty' on these companies will do nothing to stop them dumping sewage for years to come. We can't wait any longer. More dither and delay could cause irreversible damage to wildlife and precious natural habitats.



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

Levelling up means power to the few

The levelling up white paper has landed, heralding that bigger local government bodies, with power siphoned to the few, are better.

However, to shore up this concentration of power we must have a new 'data collection body', reminiscent of the Audit Commission, to keep an eye on us to make sure this power is being used in a way that national government wants, rather than in a way our local residents and those who have voted for us want.

The paper seems to assume that the widening disparities in wealth, life experience and life expectancy are because of how local government is organised, rather than underlying historical factors, the huge squeeze on council finances and the on-going uncertainty created by single-year financial settlements.

The LGA's Independent Group will continue to advocate for genuinely accountable local representation where local decisions are based on the needs and ambitions of local people.

“Local decisions [should be] based on the needs and ambitions of local people”

We had hoped that the imperative COP26 presented would be reflected in the levelling up white paper. Instead, we have policy silos, with the Net Zero Strategy on the one hand and levelling up on the other.

Our group is keeping climate change at the top of its agenda, and our climate change conference on 18 March promises to bring together inspirational speakers with practical examples of where our councils are improving life on the ground.

It is through collective action and decision-making that we will make the difference at the local level to build up to global change.

Helping residents reduce their waste



Councillor **Neil Dallen** is Chairman of the Surrey Environment Partnership

In the wake of last year's UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), which made such a mark on news headlines, the environment has become increasingly important to our residents.

They are more aware than ever of the impact of their actions on the planet, and that includes the waste they produce.

If residents want to help the planet (and make savings for councils while they are at it), the best thing they can do with their waste is to not produce it in the first place. Reuse and recycling all play a major part too – but if it's not there in the first place, it's not a problem.

Which is why, in Surrey, we're trialling a scheme to incentivise residents in one borough to reduce the amount of waste they produce.

Rethink Waste is available to residents of Elmbridge, one of 11 local council areas in the county. If successful, it will be rolled out to residents across the rest of Surrey next year.

Rethink Waste is centred on an online platform that encourages waste reduction through targeted communication and behaviour change techniques. Residents sign up to the scheme online to earn

points, and are given a personal dashboard and sent weekly emails. These enable residents to take part in activities, online and offline, that can help reduce waste when they are at home and when they are out and about.

Content includes videos, quizzes, blogs, pledges, a zero-waste map and lots of tips, advice and resources on how to reduce waste. Dashboards also show the

Collectively, small differences can make a big impact

amount of carbon savings residents have made through their actions.

Once activities are completed, residents are rewarded with points that can be used to enter competitions, with prizes including iPads and TVs or donations to charities or local community groups.

Residents can also donate points to one of 10 primary schools in Elmbridge that have signed up to the scheme. At the end of the trial, the school with the most points will be awarded a cash grant to deliver a project that benefits the local environment.

The trial will be evaluated primarily by measuring the amount of waste produced by Elmbridge residents while the scheme was running and comparing it with a corresponding period to see the difference it has made.

It is predicted that a 1 per cent reduction in residual waste (rubbish) will lead to the project paying for itself, in addition to the environmental benefits it will bring.

The 12-month trial is being delivered by Greenredeem, an organisation that provides digital engagement platforms and behaviour change mechanisms that can support and complement existing websites and climate change initiatives.

It has had success with similar schemes in other areas in of the UK, and is being supported by Elmbridge Borough Council.

We know that collectively, small differences can make a big impact. Residents can all do more to reduce their waste. With the right knowledge, encouragement and incentives, we hope that Rethink Waste will be a catalyst for Surrey to start seeing waste tonnages head in the right direction – downwards!

i Cllr Neil Dallen (Residents' Association) is Chair of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment and Safe Communities Committee.

The Surrey Environment Partnership is made up of Surrey County Council and the county's 11 district and borough councils. It aims to manage Surrey's waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable manner; see www.surreyep.org.uk



Motion for the ocean



Councillor **Dr Pam Buchan** (Lab) is Vice-Chair of Plymouth City Council's Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

In November 2021, Plymouth City Council was the first in local government to make an Ocean Recovery Declaration using the 'Motion for the Ocean', a model motion ready to be adopted by local authorities across the UK.

We created the Motion for the Ocean after recognising that, while the Climate Emergency Declaration was gaining momentum, too often the critical role of the ocean in meeting commitments on climate change was overlooked.

The ocean and climate are integral to one another. The climate emergency cannot be tackled without addressing our relationship with the marine environment.

The ocean provides primary food sources for enormous numbers of people, is a climate regulator and the world's greatest carbon sink. Its health affects us all, even when it feels distant. That's why the Motion for the Ocean was written, to support the needs of councillors representing inland councils just as much as coastal councils.

Plymouth declared a climate emergency in 2019, the year that we declared our intention to build the UK's first national marine park. But, as a council, we hadn't yet connected these intentions in our policy approach.

I attended the Coastal Futures Ocean Recovery Conference 2021 as a marine social science researcher, listening to scientists arguing that politicians don't take the urgent state of our oceans seriously. As a scientist, it can be difficult to be heard by national government, but councils work at the coal face, listening to citizens. As a researcher of marine citizenship, I knew that local authorities can help citizens and politicians get to grips with this critical issue.

I enlisted the help of Emily Cunningham, a marine and coastal specialist and Lead Officer of the LGA's Coastal Special Interest Group, and Nicola Bridge, Head of Ocean Advocacy and Engagement at the Ocean Conservation Trust, and a specialist in ocean literacy and public engagement with the ocean.

The timely publication of government 'asks' for marine health and management, led by Dr Sian Rees, of Plymouth University, informed our thinking, and we developed the Motion for the Ocean.

The model motion stresses the importance of the ocean for climate, highlighting that local planning and decision-making are pivotal in negotiating the relationship people have with their natural places.

✧ We need to innovate towards a sustainable blue economy ✧

It recognises that coastal authorities have direct responsibility for a range of impacts at the coast, and that inland authority areas impact the ocean at source, particularly through waste and water management and carbon emissions.

The motion calls for councils to help develop ocean literacy and marine citizenship in residents, facilitating connections to the marine environment that sit in the heart and drive people to act.

We must continue to use the sea and cannot manage it simply by excluding people; instead, we need to innovate towards a sustainable and equitable blue economy.

The motion demands that national government use evidence from research and coastal communities, committing resources to establish sustainable ways to manage coastal and offshore waters.

As a back-bencher in opposition, tabling the motion and seeing it pass in Plymouth was my proudest moment since being elected in 2018. So far this year, Falmouth Town, South Tyneside and North Norfolk Councils have all declared an urgent need for ocean recovery.

Please help keep the wave rolling by bringing the Motion for the Ocean to your council.

i For more information and the text of the **Ocean Recovery Declaration**, please visit www.lgacoastalsig.com/motion-for-the-ocean and/or the Ocean Conservation Trust at bit.ly/3oEMCn1



Tracey Robbins is
Head of UK Delivery at
Eden Project
Communities

Royal celebration can leave a lasting legacy

Councils are key to Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, which will be taking place from 2- 5 June. As an official part of the weekend's programme, The Big Jubilee Lunch is encouraging millions to get together to celebrate what matters to their community.

As with previous Jubilee and other royal celebratory occasions, we anticipate an increase in the amount of local activity, and call on councils to support residents with free and easy road closures where possible.

The Big Lunch gives neighbours a chance to get to know each other a little better – but its impact isn't limited to just one day. Research proves that creating small connections at Big Lunches can ignite more meaningful relationships, boost wellbeing, and lead to greater community engagement, volunteering, and community-led initiatives. Nine million people took part last year, so that's a lot of small connections that can make a huge difference!

✧ *Three out of four people find new friends to keep in touch with* ✧

Our 2017 research, by the Centre of Business and Economic Research, explored the impact of community-led initiatives on societal welfare and the economy, revealing that neighbourliness helps ease demand on public services by providing locally run alternatives, such as neighbourhood watch schemes and local litter picks. The study showed the saving to local public services equated to £2.9 billion, rising to a potential £8.1 billion if all the people not currently involved in community activities, such as The Big Lunch, switched to being involved.

Many neighbourhoods also use their annual Big Lunch to raise funds for local causes close to their hearts, and to garner longer-term support for community

initiatives. A total of £50 million has been raised for charity through Big Lunch events since 2016, and almost four in 10 people were inspired to take on a voluntary position as a result of The Big Lunch in 2021.

Three out of four people find new friends to keep in touch with at The Big Lunch, and 79 per cent agree that it reduces loneliness and isolation, highlighting the importance of creating inclusive spaces where people of all ages and backgrounds can find the confidence to make connections. This was vital during the pandemic, when areas with a stronger sense of community were able to react more quickly to support those in need.

We need to maintain and build more resilient communities to face the challenges ahead.

Thousands of people are already signed up to organise a Big Jubilee Lunch during this June's bank holiday weekend. Our hope is that the occasion will not only be a chance to celebrate a once-in-a-lifetime moment in history, but also the spark that leads to an equally significant legacy of community engagement across the country.



To find out more about The Big Jubilee Lunch and to order a free information pack, visit
www.thebigjubileelunch.com



Join us for a Big Lunch and Learn session!

Find out how to support residents to get involved

Discover facts, myths and top tips to encourage community-led models of celebration

Share what your council is planning
7 March, 12.30-1.30pm

[edenproject.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qcu-srDgtHNKf9vSVKEgWL4HjOoAeSlm](https://edenproject.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZ0qcu-srDgtHNKf9vSVKEgWL4HjOoAeSlm)

COUNCILLOR

Getting under the skin of council budgets



Councillor **Ketan Sheth** (Lab) is Brent Council's Chair of Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and co-chaired its Budget Scrutiny Task Group

It's a testing but all-too-familiar mix: funding cuts from central government, skyrocketing demand for local services, a growing population, tough choices, and communities vulnerable as they recover from the pandemic.

As we approached budget setting, our situation in Brent, a north-west London borough, mirrored the position of local authorities around the country.

Against this challenging backdrop, I believe the role of effective scrutiny is more important than ever, and so too is learning from one another.

This year, I co-chaired Brent Council's Budget Scrutiny Task Group. It was our job to get under the skin of budget proposals, to grasp their real-world effects and to make recommendations for where we felt the decisions of our cabinet and full council could be strengthened.

To bring forward a balanced budget, we were called to scrutinise a package of savings totalling £2.7 million, alongside council tax increases.

Given the stark financial picture across the country, we wanted to ensure scrutiny was grounded in the reality of the difficult decisions facing the cabinet.

As a group, we worked with officers to develop a broader approach than simply reviewing proposed savings.

Instead of solely relying on the community consultation undertaken by the cabinet, we went into detail on the impacts, and sought out testimony from people on the ground. We felt we needed to get a deeper understanding of the experience of those who use Brent's services and the complexity of their situations.

The idea was to test underlying assumptions made in the proposals, and to give cabinet and full council more information and evidence on which to base their decisions. We

identified a number of areas to probe:

- the impact of COVID-19 on income from business rates, council tax and rents
- impacts on health inequalities work when grant funding ends
- implications of COVID-19 for the adult social care budget, especially mental health
- pressures within the dedicated school grant
- how the council's £17 million pandemic recovery package is being spent.

The task group agreed a mix of less conventional scrutiny methods to build this holistic view, including focus groups and detailed evidence sessions with people on the ground – from local head teachers and voluntary and community sector partners, to teams from our wellbeing services and frontline customer services staff.

By taking this approach, we were able

to assess the wider financial and service context, and identify possible future budget pressures and the likely emerging needs of our communities.

It allowed us to make a number of nuanced, practical recommendations. Most focused not on the savings themselves, but on how the cabinet might work differently to overcome and address some of those pressures.

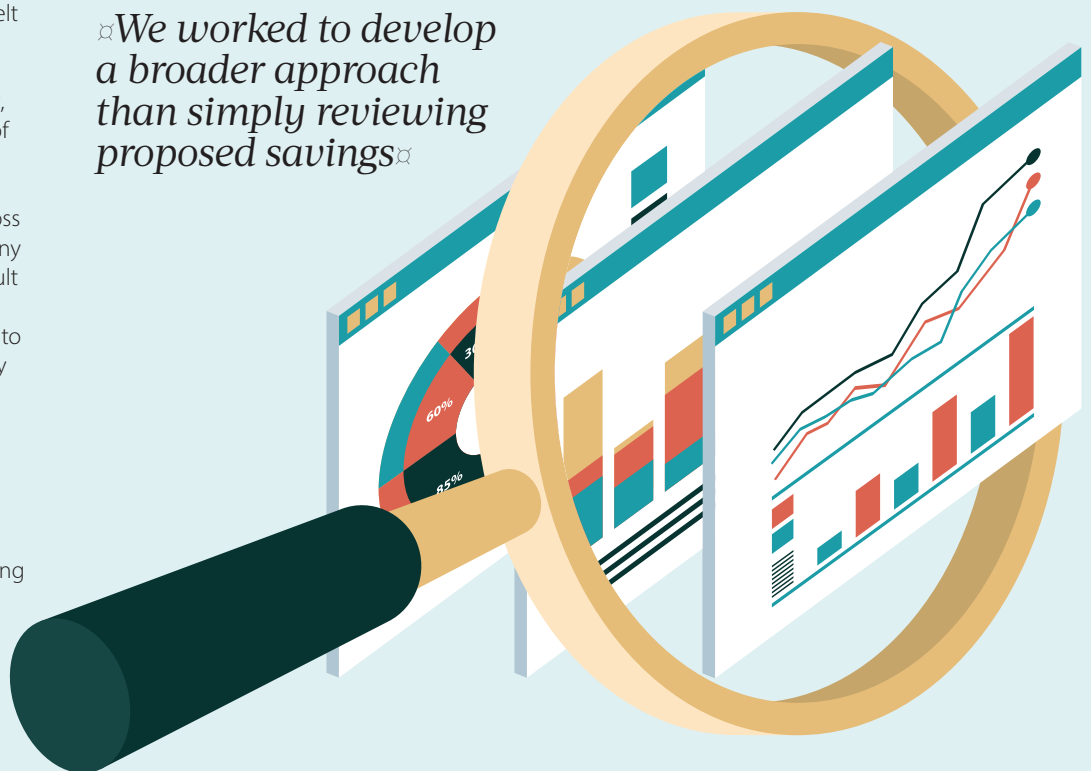
The group also identified areas where we felt the council could lobby effectively for more support nationally and regionally.

We have also established mechanisms for pulling insights from these testimonies and learnings from this process through to future budget scrutiny cycles.

Ultimately, we are all trying to deliver a better outcome for local people.

I am a big believer in the power of scrutiny to support good decision-making and feel this is best realised by being a 'critical friend'. The approach we took this year achieved just that.

✧ We worked to develop a broader approach than simply reviewing proposed savings ✧



ELECTIONS

Against the run of play



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



This month's set of by-elections includes a first, and two potential 'last hurrahs'.

The contest in Oundle was the first in either of the two new Northamptonshire authorities since their inaugural elections last May – and it produced a suitably memorable result. The victorious Liberal Democrats, mounting one of their fabled 'pavement politics' campaigns, achieved a swing from each of their opponents compared with 2021.

Indeed, the new councillor, Charlie Best, told the local newspaper, with no sense of irony: 'I will be addressing issues such as... the crumbling pavements'.

In Cumbria and Somerset, on the other hand, it was a case of seeing out the old rather than seeing in the new. The respective districts of Allerdale, and Somerset West and Taunton, will cease to exist under the county-wide reorganisations planned to take effect from April 2023.

Indeed, the latter district may have the distinction of being among the shortest-lived councils ever. Somerset West and Taunton was only created in 2019, following a merger of its two eponymous predecessors.

The Alcombe ward, hard by Butlin's holiday resort at Minehead, witnessed another Liberal Democrat success, aided perhaps by the disqualification of the previous Independent councillor for non-attendance – something of which voters often take a dim view.

Not that the Liberal Democrats have had it all their own way. The



party had topped the poll in the three-member Wigston Meadowcourt ward in Oadby and Wigston – Liberal Democrat controlled for more than 30 years – at every election since 2011. On this occasion, they suffered the humiliation of losing to the Conservatives by more than 500 votes,

Local by-elections

Allerdale, Stainburn and Clifton

LAB GAIN FROM IND
9.3% over Con Turnout 21.8%

Bristol, Southmead

LAB HELD
2.8% over Green Turnout 21.2%

Cotswold, Campden & Vale

CON HELD
12.4% over Lib Dem Turnout 42.4%

Dacorum, Berkhamsted West

LIB DEM HELD
42.1% over Con Turnout 31.2%

Dacorum, Boxmoor

LIB DEM HELD
33% over Con Turnout 32.1%

Dartford, Maypole and Leyton Cross

CON HELD
48.8% over Green Turnout 24.5%

Dartford, Wilmington, Sutton-At-Hone & Hawley

CON HELD
49.3% over Lab Turnout 24.1%

Eastleigh, Eastleigh Central

LIB DEM HELD
20.5% over Lab Turnout 23.9%

Kent, Wilmington

CON HELD
38% over Lab Turnout 23%

Leicester, Evington

LAB HELD
4.4% over Con Turnout 31.9%

Manchester, Ancoats and Beswick

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB
15.3% over Lab Turnout 17.8%

Mid Suffolk, Thurston

GREEN HELD
34% over Con Turnout 28.1%

Newark & Sherwood, Collingham

CON GAIN FROM IND
22.2% over Lib Dem Turnout 37.7%

North East Lincolnshire, Park

CON HELD
7.4% over Lab Turnout 21.2%

North Northamptonshire, Oundle

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON
7.3% over Con Turnout 35.4%

Nottinghamshire, Collingham

IND HELD
35.3% over Con Turnout 31.4

Oadby and Wigston, Wigston Meadowcourt

CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM
36.3% over Lib Dem Turnout 28%

Somerset West and Taunton, Alcombe

LIB DEM GAIN FROM IND
7% over Con Turnout 25.6%

Tamworth, Spital

CON HELD
9.3% over Ind Turnout 22.9%

Wealden, Hailsham South

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON
21.2% over Con Turnout 23%

West Devon, Tavistock North

CON GAIN FROM IND
4.4% over Lib Dem Turnout 24%



LETTERS

Becoming a councillor

Encouraging more people to consider being a councillor is an excellent idea (**first** 668). But why are so many discouraged from putting their names forward these days?

As a member coming to the end of my second four-year term, I found right at the start that the sheer length of meetings would act as a barrier.

We would receive lengthy paperwork with our agenda, which we'd conscientiously go through before turning up on the day.

But then, in the meeting, we would receive lengthy reports from officers, that often simply repeated the information we'd already received.

Inevitably, this was done through a tedious PowerPoint presentation, which people would go through verbatim.

As a result of this, meetings that could be got through in an hour could last more than two, with those of us having other lives to lead reluctant to contribute to any debate for fear of prolonging the agony.

Oh, and the least said about full council meetings going on for four or five hours the better!

Cllr Tim Mickleburgh (Lab), North East Lincolnshire Council

Opportunities for children

When I became Erewash's Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing last May, one of my top priorities was to promote opportunities for children and young people.

After meeting with council officers and enquiring about what programmes our sport and health team delivered, I realised we had the ability to make a real difference.

We had all the equipment, qualified instructors and the funding to deliver 'Balanceability' classes across our borough, but this was not well known to the public.

Balanceability is an excellent 'learn to cycle' scheme for children aged two to six. It combines balance bikes with a programme of activities, and the goal is for children to cycle without ever needing stabilisers. The programme helps children with confidence and resilience, as well as the opportunity to learn and play with peers.

We devised a plan to upscale our delivery of these classes to at least six per year. In the past five months alone, we have held four classes and there has been huge demand from local parents – we still have more than 50 children on our waiting list.

After the social isolation of the past two years, it is crucial that children have the opportunity to take part in projects such as this – and, thanks to grant funding, we will keep the sessions free, so they are inclusive to all. We have plans to extend the programme and it wouldn't be possible without the amazing team at Erewash Borough Council.

Cllr Paul Maginnis (Con),
Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing,
Erewash Borough Council



on the back of a 27 per cent swing compared with May 2019.

It seems that the late incumbent had a significant personal vote, but there was controversy too over the council's recent introduction of town centre parking charges.

Local issues and some low turnouts may also help explain why Labour lost ground in 14 of the 17 recent contests where they fielded a candidate – and the party's weakest performances were in seemingly rock-solid city wards.

The Evington ward in Leicester, which has a majority South Asian-heritage population, is in the Leicester East parliamentary constituency, where the sitting MP is currently suspended by the Labour Party and is appealing against a criminal conviction that could result in a recall petition.

Labour did at least retain that seat, which is more than can be said in the case of Manchester's Ancoats and Beswick ward. The sitting member resigned, blaming a 'toxic culture' among her council colleagues, and then disputed the selection procedure that chose her putative successor. The Liberal Democrats were only too happy to fill the void.

It has become a cliché to assert 'all politics is local', but it's been proven again this month and will doubtless lead to more outcomes 'against the run of play' in May's elections, too.



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

A graphic element for the LGA22 logo, featuring a stylized 'L' composed of geometric shapes: a blue semi-circle with diagonal lines, a yellow triangle, a red triangle, and a purple dotted triangle.

LGA22

Annual Conference
and Exhibition
28-30 June, Harrogate

www.local.gov.uk/conference
#LGAConf22