

# Local government first

Local  
Government  
Association

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## LGA annual conference

The issues that matter locally



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can make savings  
and build resilience

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for older residents



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## Reflect and reset

**I**t will be a real pleasure to meet many of you in Harrogate next week, for the LGA's first in-person annual conference since 2019.

We will be discussing a wide range of key issues for local government with a plethora of top speakers from national and local government and the wider public and private sector (see p10).

This is the first edition of **first**, your LGA membership magazine, to be received by all councillors newly elected on 5 May. Welcome, and please be sure to check out the support and training we can provide to help you through your first months in local government and beyond (p24).

Elsewhere in this month's magazine, four councils outline how sharing their chief executives and wider workforces is saving money and improving their resilience (p16); we discuss the alternatives to motoring taxes as the UK transitions to electric vehicles (p19); and we reflect on the findings of the independent review of children's social care (p20).

The LGA is showcasing its expanded programme of support for disabled candidates and councillors to mark Disability Pride month (p23). And we hear from Tonic Housing Association Ltd about providing LGBTQ-affirming supported housing for older residents (p27).

**Cllr James Jamieson**  
is LGA Chairman



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## Call to reinstate remote meetings

**A year since a government call for evidence on remote meetings closed, the LGA has called for virtual and hybrid council meetings to be an integral part of the future of local democracy in England.**

During the national lockdown in spring 2020, emergency regulations allowed councils to carry out meetings remotely, to ensure critical decisions were made quickly and democratically during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This proved successful, with councils highlighting an increase in participation from elected members and residents.

The Welsh Government legislated to make these changes permanent in 2021, but in England councils were forced to return to in-person meetings.

An LGA council survey, conducted before the emergence of the Omicron variant last year, found that returning exclusively to in-person meetings had resulted in 72 per cent of councils seeing a drop in councillor attendance at statutory meetings and 73 per cent a drop in public attendance.

Ministers launched a call for evidence into remote meetings, which closed on 17 June 2021, but have failed to release the results or set out a plan to take the issue forward – leaving English councils uncertain and unable to plan effectively for the future, despite much of their workforce adapting successfully to virtual and hybrid working patterns.

Flexibility is also vital in attracting a wider range of people to stand as candidates, with

recent research finding that 72 per cent of councillors surveyed felt a hybrid model could attract more ethnic minority and younger people and women to stand in local elections.

Virtual and hybrid meetings also support the attendance of councillors with caring responsibilities, disabilities, or chronic illnesses.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "This issue is a priority for councils up and down the country.

"The pandemic proved that using virtual meeting options can help councils work more effectively and efficiently, and can in fact increase engagement from both councillors and residents, which is a vital part of local democracy.

"We urge the Government to act quickly to empower local authorities to make the most suitable choice for their organisation and communities and bring them in step with their residents' expectations of organisations that provide local services in the 21st century."

## Food strategy 'a missed opportunity'

The Government's long-awaited food strategy is a "missed opportunity" to tackle issues around food poverty and obesity, the LGA and others have said.

The strategy, for England, commits to increasing domestic food production in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, promising £270 million of

investment in new technologies until 2029. In addition, the strategy sets out plans to create a new professional body for the farming and growing industry, to step up professional training.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board said: "Obesity and diet-related health

issues are one of the biggest public health challenges we face, with the cost of treating obesity-related ill health forecast to rise to £9.7 billion a year by 2050.

"The strategy response represents a missed opportunity to tackle the underlying causes of many of these issues, which will continue to be exacerbated by the growing cost-of-living crisis.

"Unless the Government takes urgent action, its ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030 will be missed.

"One of the ways these

challenges can be met is for the Government to expand access to, and availability of, Healthy Start Vouchers – to ensure more families on low incomes can access fresh fruit and vegetables – as well as expanding access and increasing the eligibility criteria for free school meals, to include all children who are facing food insecurity.

"We are urging the Government to act now to ensure healthy food remains affordable to those who need it the most."





## Polluted rivers 'halt house building'

New LGA analysis shows that more than 7 per cent of England's planned house building cannot go ahead because of rising pollution levels in rivers.

The Habitats Directive, which was established to protect nature and biodiversity, can call a halt to development work where pollution levels are too high in nearby rivers, as well as in other areas, because of low water levels.

The LGA analysis shows 23 councils have more than 90 per cent of likely house building areas impacted by the law.

Together, around 20,000 new homes a year will not be able to be built unless developers and councils can prove they will produce no additional pollution.

Without long-term action to clean up rivers, these special habitats will remain in challenging circumstances, and the building bans will continue to have profound impacts in many

places, halting growth and infrastructure, and affecting jobs and council finances.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, said: "People need homes, schools and doctors' surgeries, and a safe and clean environment. Councils are working tirelessly to enable house building while upholding high environmental standards. However, they cannot achieve this alone. We need to reduce pollution at source, which predominantly originates from water treatment and farming.

"The Government and its agencies, house builders, the agricultural sector and water companies must all come together with councils to find short-term solutions, while doing everything we can to reduce pollution at source."

The LGA is launching a nutrient and water neutrality policy inquiry to examine what can be done to reduce stresses on fragile environments.

● See [bit.ly/3xVh95j](https://bit.ly/3xVh95j)

## Measures to ease cost-of-living crisis

Measures to tackle soaring energy prices, including an energy bill discount of £400 for all UK households this October, have been announced by the Chancellor.

Eight million vulnerable households will also receive at least £1,200 of extra support, to be partly offset by a 25 per cent windfall tax on oil and gas firms' profits. Rishi Sunak also announced a £500 million increase for the Household Support Fund in England, extending it from October until March 2023.

LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said the extra support to mitigate the impact of rising energy bills and funding for those on the lowest incomes will help ease the pressure on household budgets.

He added: "We are pleased the Chancellor has acted on calls by the LGA, councils and partners to increase and extend the Household Support Fund to the end of this financial year.

"These measures must be accompanied by a longer-term solution to addressing wider cost-of-living pressures, which are not going to end any time soon, and reducing the need for further emergency support.

"Councils and local partners will continue to do what they can to protect those on the lowest incomes against higher costs for food, transport and other essentials, and target help to those facing the most complex challenges.

"To reduce the need for short-term crisis support, there needs to be a consensus on how we move forward and build resilience through our wider welfare system, which includes not just benefits, but also employment support, housing, health and financial inclusion."

## Lack of transparency on levelling up funding

**The Government has been accused of drawing up rules that allow billions of pounds of levelling up funding to be handed to their favoured areas, in a cross-party report from MPs.**

The Commons' Public Accounts Committee found that the principles for successful awards on the first round of the UK-wide £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund were only finalised by ministers after they knew who, from the 170 shortlisted bidders, would win, and who would not, as a result of those principles.

The committee recommends that, in future, the principles for awarding funding must be determined before shortlisted bidders are disclosed to ministers.

The report also notes that councils have faced confusion over the different funding pots for local economic growth and have had to respond piecemeal to each new announcement over the years.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said that timely, sustainable funding for levelling up, including the full rollout of UK Shared

Prosperity Fund allocations – alongside clear and measurable targets, as specified in the report – would go a long way to achieving local solutions to the challenges we face.

He said: "Turning levelling up from a political slogan into a reality will only be achieved if councils have the powers and funding they need.

"Competitive bidding for short-term, small pots of funding creates uncertainty and uses up vital resources in councils, which could be better spent on planning ahead for their communities."

## In brief

### Pay claim

National Employers has been consulting with councils in England and Wales in response to the local government unions' 2022 pay claim for a minimum £2,000 increase or the current rate of inflation (RPI), whichever is higher. Cllr Sian Timoney, Chair of the National Employers, said: "Local government continues to face significant financial challenges, having lost more than £15 billion in government funding since 2010. As well as rising inflation, cost of living, energy and fuel prices, the forecast increases to the National Living Wage present a significant cost that will put further pressure on council budgets."

## Hospital beds

The NHS requires 13,000 more staffed beds across the UK, according to a report from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine. In response, the LGA has reiterated that a sustainable NHS depends on a sustainable social care system. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Getting patients out of hospitals and back in their homes with the correct support, or into care facilities, is crucial for alleviating pressure on NHS beds. The LGA has been warning of the increasingly urgent need for sustainable funding and support for social care for some time. Vital action is needed to improve this situation, not just to free up hospital beds, but also to put social care on a sustainable footing, recruit and retain and increase the pay of staff, and allow the sector to thrive."

## Health and care leadership

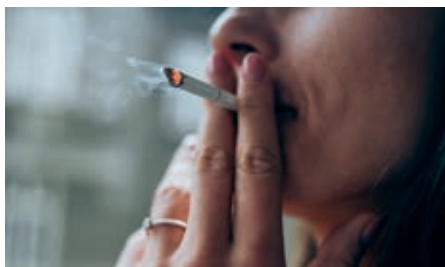
An independent review of health and adult social care leadership in England has set out seven recommendations aimed at ensuring the right leadership is in place at all levels, helping services to deliver the best possible care, tackling the COVID-19 backlog and addressing the disparities the pandemic has exposed across the country. Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "We are pleased with this report and its message of the need to improve collaborative leadership across the NHS and social care, and to focus on place. Our social care services and staff do an outstanding job in difficult circumstances."

## 'Raise minimum smoking age', says review

The minimum age for buying cigarettes should be raised by one year annually until no-one is able to take up smoking in England, an independent review into smoking has recommended.

As well as raising the minimum age of sale, the review also recommends the Government invests £125 million a year in a comprehensive 'smokefree 2030 programme' with a 'polluter pays' levy placed on tobacco companies to help fund the investment.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Smoking-related illness is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the UK and is a major challenge for our health and social care system."



"As well as impacting upon health, smoking places a significant burden on the public purse – to the tune of £12.6 billion each year."

"We strongly support the recommendation that government must urgently invest an additional £125 million for tobacco control to achieve its 'smokefree 2030' ambition."

"There is increasing evidence that e-cigarettes act as an important gateway to helping people to stop smoking and it is good this is recognised in this report, but also that it is vital to regulate them effectively and enforce the laws stringently, so as to keep them out of the hands of children."

"Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health. Smokers are four times more likely to succeed in quitting when using a local stop smoking service."

"Councils want to go faster in improving the health of their communities, including becoming smoke free, but this needs to be supported by adequate funding and stronger government policies, including taking forward the recommendations of this review."

## Plans to improve tenants' rights

**The Government is to abolish 'no fault' evictions – something for which the LGA has long campaigned – and introduce other measures to redress the balance between landlords and 4.4 million privately renting tenants in England.**

'A fairer private rented sector', its new White Paper, also envisages the introduction of a new private renters' ombudsman to help settle disputes.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "Councils want their residents to have the security of a safe and well-maintained home, with any issues quickly and satisfactorily addressed."

"Removal of 'no fault' evictions is a key step towards increased protection for private renters and will allow them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction."

"It will also be important that landlords are able to get their properties back in a timely fashion where they have a valid reason to do so."

He added: "The commitment to extending a legally binding 'decent homes standard' to improve conditions in the private rented sector is positive. This reform should be implemented quickly, and it is vital that councils are sufficiently resourced, through new burdens funding, to support the implementation of the standard."

"To go even further towards tackling insecure and unfit housing, we would like to see a review of local housing allowance rates, and councils to have stronger selective licensing powers by removing the requirement for Secretary of State approval for larger schemes."

# Right to buy extended to housing associations

**Around 2.5 million housing association tenants in England are to be given the right to buy their homes at a discounted price, with government pledging to build a new social home for every one sold.**

Currently, English council housing tenants can purchase their home for up to 70 per cent off the market value. Right to Buy was abolished in Wales in 2019.

The LGA has warned that measures to support home ownership should not lead to a reduction in the overall number of affordable social rented homes.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "We need to be urgently increasing, not reducing, the supply of affordable social homes. "With more than 1.1 million households currently on social housing waiting lists, any loss of social rented housing would risk pushing more families into the private rented sector, as well as driving

up housing benefit spending and rents, and exacerbating our homelessness crisis at a time of an escalating cost-of-living crisis.

"Any houses sold must be replaced quickly, in the same local authority area and on a like-for-like basis.

"Equally, the cost of discounts must not be funded from the sale of council housing stock, nor be met from existing government funding commitments for delivery of additional affordable homes.

"The Right to Buy scheme for council tenants also needs urgent reform, and councils need to be able to keep 100 per cent of receipts and set discounts locally.

"The number of new council homes being built is not able to keep pace with those sold under Right to Buy, and the discounts available, along with the funds that have to be returned to Treasury, are leaving councils with less and less resources to catch up."



## Fines for failing social housing landlords

Ofsted-style inspections and unlimited fines for failing social housing landlords look set to be introduced in England under the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, currently before Parliament.

The Bill would also strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's powers, allowing them to enter properties with only 48-hours' notice (down from 28 days), and to make emergency repairs where there is deemed to be a serious risk to tenants, with landlords footing the bill.

It will also require landlords to have a named person responsible for health and safety.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "The vast majority of social landlords are responsible and provide decent housing to tenants and residents, but recent reports have shone a light on the need for continuous learning and improvement to be made.

"Councils want all residents to be able to live in safe and secure, high-quality housing.

"The LGA continues to support councils to improve their housing management services and engagement with tenants and residents through the delivery of a social housing management peer challenge (see p15) and promotion of best practice, as part of our sector support offer.

"As well as improving existing homes, the social housing supply is not sufficient to meet the current housing demand. This is why we want to see long-term plans to give councils powers to build 100,000 high-quality, climate-friendly social homes a year, including reform of the Right to Buy scheme, which has made it difficult for councils to build replacement homes at the rate at which they are sold."

# Local taxpayers 'subsidising' festivals

Local taxpayers are heavily subsidising some commercial events because of outdated licensing fees, the LGA has said.

Under the Licensing Act 2003, councils in England and Wales responsible for granting licences can charge a centrally set fee to cover the cost of issuing, administering, and enforcing these licences – but the fee has not been updated since the Act's introduction in 2005.

The LGA has highlighted how some festivals – attracting up to 5,000 paying attendees – pay just £100 for a licence. This is despite these types of events taking a significant amount of council time to manage.

It wants councils to be able to set fees that recover the full cost of administering licences, as a House of Lords select committee recommended in 2017.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Councils want to support their local culture offer and ensure their towns and areas are attractive destinations to host events and licensed premises.

"However, with councils facing ever

increasing budget pressures, there is a dire need for fees to be updated to fairly reflect current administrative costs.

"Setting fees at local cost-recovery level will not impact the viability of businesses and events, because they are not a significant proportion of overall operating costs, but it will ensure that councils are reimbursed for the costs they incur and stop taxpayers subsidising licensed businesses and commercial events."



## The best start in life

### The LGA is prioritising the Schools Bill in its parliamentary work

**The Schools Bill and the preceding White Paper set out the Government's ambition to tackle inequalities and ensure every child in England has the right support to meet their potential.**

Ensuring every child and young person has the best start in life, supported by a high-performing school system, is a key priority for local government.

We are particularly pleased that the Bill will allow councils to set up and lead their own multi-academy trusts (MATs), which builds on years of campaigning by the LGA.

Councils have an excellent track record of providing a high-quality education for pupils, with 92 per cent of maintained schools rated by Ofsted as 'outstanding' or 'good' – a higher proportion than any other type of school – so it is welcome that pupils will continue to benefit from this expertise.

Councils and maintained schools will need to be convinced, though, that the Government's ambition for every school to be a part of a MAT by 2030 will, in and of itself, drive improvements in outcomes.

It's also positive that the Government has listened to our calls to introduce a local register of children who are not in school, to help ensure all children are receiving a suitable education in a safe environment.

However, there are key areas where the Bill needs strengthening, and we have been working with peers of all parties to secure further reforms.

First, we disagree with Whitehall setting the budgets of 24,000 schools centrally and are concerned that the national funding formula will not be able to meet local needs adequately.

We are calling on government to retain an element of local flexibility and work with us to develop a sustainable solution that meets all local education costs.

Second, while councils have a statutory duty to ensure there is a school place for every child, they lack the powers



to direct academies to admit individual pupils or expand school places.

We are therefore pressing for government to commit to resolving this issue within six months of the Bill passing into law.

Third, while the register of children not in school is an important step forward, this measure alone will not ensure families have the right support or safeguard vulnerable children.

Councils recognise that the vast majority of parents who home educate provide their children with a quality education. But to strengthen support for children who do need it, we are calling for councils to have powers to meet with home-educated children and their parents. This will enable councils to

provide families with targeted support and act as a vital safeguard to help prevent children disappearing from the view of all public services.

Finally, we are calling for the Bill to improve public transparency of MATs' expenditure, to make sure public money is delivering the best outcomes for pupils.

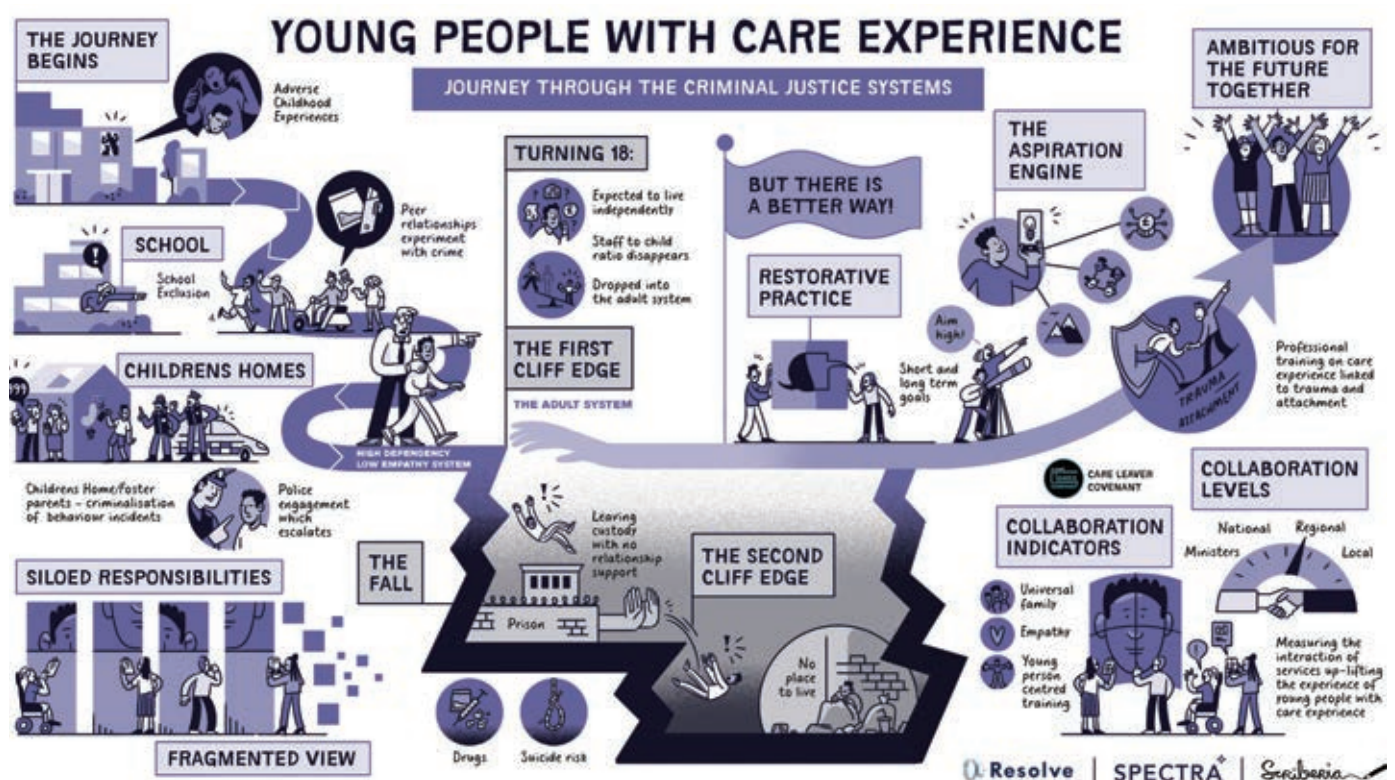
While the Bill focuses primarily on system reform, it is clear that the Government will only achieve its ambitions for education if these proposals are matched with adequate investment and concerted action to address the wider factors that shape children's educational outcomes, such as poverty and disadvantage.

As the Bill progresses through Parliament, we continue to call on government to bring forward a long-term, cross-Whitehall strategy that tackles these issues and gives every child the best start in life.



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

CCLA collaborates with local authorities for a Better World because healthy investment markets depend upon healthy communities



This year CCLA is partnering with Spectra, a social purpose company supporting vulnerable groups of young people to fulfil their potential and achieve better life outcomes.

[ccla.co.uk](https://ccla.co.uk)



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

# Learning and looking ahead

The LGA's annual conference is a chance to reflect on recent experiences and discuss what lies ahead for local government

I can't tell you how much I am looking forward to welcoming many of you to the LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition in Harrogate next week (28-30 June).

After two brilliant 'virtual' annual conferences in 2020 and 2021, we will be meeting in person for the first time since Bournemouth in July 2019.

So much has happened since then – not least the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced us to meet virtually for so long.

While councils were heroic in the support they provided to local communities and the vaccination programme, the pandemic has had an enormous and continuing impact on local services, and on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our residents.

This year, councils have also stepped up to provide support for those fleeing the war in Ukraine, and for those on the lowest incomes struggling most with the rising cost of living.

We know that both these issues continue to impact councils significantly, with certain services facing more acute pressures. Rising energy prices and high inflation rates, meanwhile, are hitting councils' finances directly – as well as those of their residents.

For example, the LGA and a coalition of leading bodies in the physical activity sector, including the District Councils' Network and ukactive, have written to the Government calling for urgent support to save leisure facilities from going under as they face a rise in energy costs of up to 150 per cent on last year.

A ukactive survey of public leisure operators found up to 79 per cent of public leisure facilities say they are 'likely' or 'extremely likely' to cease operations within the next six months unless support is forthcoming.

Meanwhile, more than 80 per cent of library leaders expect to see an increase in people using libraries to keep warm next winter, with 56 per cent already hosting food, clothing or hygiene banks/donation points and 47 per cent providing help using price-comparison websites, according to a Libraries Connected briefing note.

The LGA will have more to say about the funding gap facing local government and the cost-of-living crisis during conference week.

In late May, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a UK-wide package of support to help with the cost of living, which will ease the pressure on household budgets this year by



The LGA Hub and Innovation Zone in Bournemouth, 2019

*Library leaders expect to see an increase in people using libraries to keep warm*

providing extra support to mitigate the impact of rising energy bills and funding for those on the lowest incomes.

It is good that this support is going through the mainstream benefits system, and that the Government has committed to uprating benefits next year in line with inflation. This allows councils to target their support towards those facing the greatest need.

It is also helpful that the council-administered Household Support Fund in England has been increased and extended to the end of the current financial year.

But many of our residents remain financially insecure, with uncertain and unpredictable earnings and outgoings, and little or no savings to tide them over.

They remain vulnerable to continuing cost-of-living pressures and future economic shocks, whether arising from the war in Ukraine, the growing climate crisis or other unpredictable



national and international events. We therefore need to find a longer-term solution to helping vulnerable households, and think honestly, openly and collaboratively about how best to ensure that our communities are more financially and socially resilient in the future.

Consequently, the LGA continues to emphasise the importance of local flexibility and leadership in levelling up, enabling councils to work with their partners and communities to deliver strong, inclusive and resilient local economies and reduce disparities in opportunities and outcomes.

Devolving greater responsibility and spending power to local councils to enable them to maximise social and economic capital in their places will enable them to ensure that communities are more inclusive and resilient.

After all, councils are uniquely well placed to lead local partnerships that bring together key priorities, including housing affordability, food sustainability, energy efficiency and access to training and skills development, alongside financial support and inclusion.

There isn't one approach to solving the cost-of-living crisis – we need a collective response to ensure that our

most vulnerable residents do not have to choose between heating and eating.

Councils can play a key role, but they need support from government and partners to do this. I, for one, will be listening closely to what our ministerial and opposition speakers (see panel, below) have to say about this at annual conference.

Beyond the cost of living, conference will, as ever, be covering a wide range of issues affecting local government. These include: support for Ukrainian families; levelling up; sustainable homes; climate change; adult social care reform and assurance; corporate parenting; preventing homelessness; civility in public life; the future of our high streets; heritage and the visitor economy; local government finance; and much, much more.

I hope you enjoy catching up with colleagues in Harrogate, and find something to inform and inspire your amazing work in support of our local communities.

See below for our great programme of speakers and please visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference) to join us at the local government event of the year. If you can't make it, you can follow conference on social media at [#LGAConf22](https://twitter.com/LGAConf22).

## LGA annual conference

### Keynote speakers include:

#### **Michael Gove MP**

*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities*

#### **Lisa Nandy MP**

*Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing, Communities and Local Government*

#### **Sir Ed Davey MP**

*Leader of the Liberal Democrats*

#### **Baroness Lola Young OBE**

*Crossbench peer*

#### **Kriss Akabusi MBE**

*Olympian and businessman*

#### **Lord Victor Adebawale CBE**

*Chairman, NHS Confederation*

#### **Nicole Jacobs**

*Domestic Abuse Commissioner*

#### **Nadhim Zahawi MP**

*Secretary of State for Education*

#### **Kemi Badenoch MP**

*Minister for Levelling Up*

#### **Lord Richard Harrington**

*Refugees Minister*

#### **Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth**

*National Police and Crime Commissioner Lead for Violence Against Women and Girls*

#### **Gemma Tetlow**

*Chief Economist, Institute for Government*

#### **Karl Lokko**

*Chairman of Black Seed*

#### **Professor Tony Travers**

*Visiting Professor/Director, LSE Department of Government*

#### **Polly Billington**

*Chief Executive, UK100*

#### **Jackie Weaver**

*Chief Officer/Ambassador, Cheshire Association of Local Councils/Compassion in Politics*

#### **Ben Page**

*Chief Executive Officer, Ipsos*

#### **Matt Winfield**

*England Director, Sustrans*

#### **Mary Cridge**

*Interim Director of Adult Social Care, Care Quality Commission*

#### **Andrew Grinnell**

*Co-Director, Poverty Truth Network*

#### **Philippa Baker**

*Deputy Director, NHS Legislation Programme, Department of Health and Social Care*

#### **Simon Thompson**

*Principal Adviser, Natural England*

#### **Dr Wei Yang**

*Immediate Past President, Royal Town Planning Institute*

#### **Karen Creavin**

*Chief Executive, Active Wellbeing Society*

#### **Selaine Saxby MP**

*Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Broadband and Digital Communication*

#### **Rachael Bice**

*Chief Executive Officer, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust*

#### **Peter Baker**

*Chief Inspector of Buildings, Health and Safety Executive*

#### **Yvonne Aki-Sawyer**

*Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone*

#### **Nick Lowles**

*Chief Executive, HOPE Not Hate*

#### **Amy Meek**

*Co-Founder, Kids Against Plastic*

#### **Ella Meek,**

*Co-Founder, Kids Against Plastic*



# Delivering Home Ownership Through Affordable Rent to Buy

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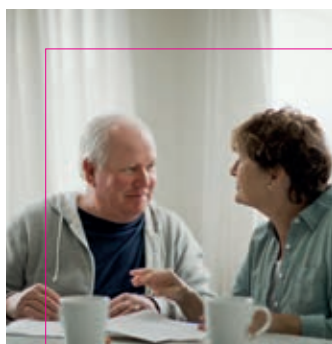
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## Newton is delighted to be sponsoring the Innovation Zone at this year's LGA conference.

Local government leaders are grappling with an unparalleled level of change across the sector, and it is critical for councils to be seizing the opportunities that exist within their local control.

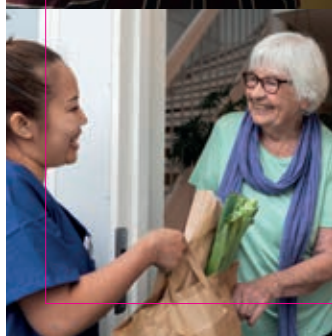
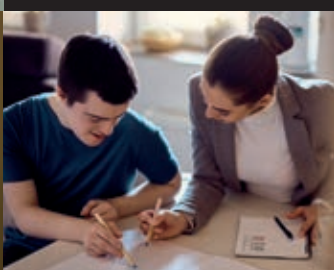
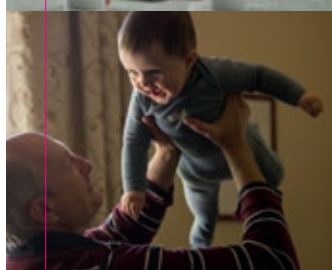
A robust evidence-base is more important than ever, and over the last few months, Newton has been supporting the sector to develop such an evidence base in three key areas:

- Setting out a vision for the future of children's social care
- Understanding the operational and financial implications of adult social care charging reforms and how to prepare to implement these locally
- Conducting in-depth diagnostic work in Special Educational Needs.

We will be sharing the emerging evidence throughout the conference – find out more from the conference app.

All conference delegates are also invited to a unique presentation by renowned speaker and former gang leader turned activist and poet, Karl Lokko, taking place on **29th June 2022, 12:25pm-1:10pm.**

**NEWTON**



# Resilience and renewal

Councils will be sharing their innovative ideas at the LGA's annual conference



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

**T**he LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition, taking place in Harrogate from 28 to 30 June, marks the return of our Innovation Zone – a lively, social space that has earned its reputation as the 'ideas hub' within the wider conference.

This year's Innovation Zone will feature an engaging programme of sessions set around the theme of 'resilience and renewal' – recognising the significant challenges councils have managed in recent years, while shining a light on some of the emerging good practice and innovative ideas being taken forward as councils look to the future.

Our diverse Innovation Zone programme features more than 30 talks by councils and partners from across the country.

Conference delegates will have the opportunity to learn about new and

innovative approaches on topics such as adults' and children's services, digital and cyber technologies, community wellbeing and health, economic growth, workforce, and equalities, diversity and inclusion, with presentations that bring to life projects and approaches across these and other areas.

All sessions will be creative and interactive, with opportunities for delegates to ask questions and share learning about improving local government services.

Our series of 'Spotlight on' talks – a new addition to the programme this year – will aim to inspire and challenge delegates to think differently and engage with big ideas; for example, on climate change.

Across the country, councils are taking urgent action in their local areas, with partners and their communities, to combat the negative impacts of climate change and deliver net-zero carbon by 2050.

Our 'Spotlight on' talk on climate change will be presented by a panel of expert speakers from councils and partners, who have lessons to share about the innovative actions they are taking to reach their local carbon-

reduction targets and adapt to, and mitigate, the effects of climate change.

The panel will discuss: a local climate adaptation tool being developed by the University of Exeter and local organisations, which helps decision-makers understand the research and recommends adaptation actions; greater collaboration between councils and businesses; and community-led energy planning.

The 'Spotlight on' series will include talks on: partnerships as a vehicle for place leadership; children's services and improving the life chances for children living in deprived areas; cyber improvement; and mental health in the workplace.

With thanks to Innovation Zone sponsor Newton, the 'Spotlight on' series will also feature a special presentation by renowned speaker – and former gang leader turned activist and poet – Karl Lokko, who will talk about his journey to activism and uniting communities.

Newton will also be providing professionally brewed coffee, giving delegates a chance to recharge!

You can view the Innovation Zone programme online at [bit.ly/3mhf8JW](https://bit.ly/3mhf8JW) and on the free LGA conference app, which can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play by searching for 'LGA Events'.

If you have any questions about the Innovation Zone, please email [innovation@local.gov.uk](mailto:innovation@local.gov.uk).

I look forward to seeing you in the zone at Harrogate!

**i** For more information about the LGA's annual conference and the Innovation Zone, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference)



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South Holland District Council has piloted a new LGA peer challenge on social housing management

# A strong voice for residents



Lord **Gary Porter** (Con) is Leader of South Holland District Council

**W**hen we were approached by the LGA to pilot its new social housing management peer challenge, we were more than happy to put ourselves out there, and take the opportunity to look to the future – and, potentially, reshape our short, medium and long-term plans for housing in the district.

We serve more than 95,000 residents, with roughly 10 per cent of registered dwellings managed by the council. We have a strong history of housing development, including dedicated homeless family units and our award-winning regeneration of Small Drove, Weston.

South Holland has committed £12.85 million to new homes since 2017, and a further £13.1 million to future development programmes, while continuing to invest in our existing stock, with an annual capital programme of around £4 million.

We saw the pilot peer challenge as presenting a great opportunity for the council. We felt there were some key strengths across our capital improvements, repairs service and strong income-collection performance,

which assisted us in demonstrating key strengths as a social landlord.

However, we also recognised a need to revisit areas such as complaints, the use of data in decision-making, and performance reporting. We also felt there were opportunities to further involve tenants, and ensure they have a strong voice and continue to be at the centre of our decision-making processes.

Throughout the challenge, we wanted our officers to feel empowered to fully engage with the LGA, so myself, other lead members and the wider cabinet supported the process and their continued involvement as much as we could.

The thorough and tailored selection of peers ensured the council was supported by a team who could fully engage in the wider objectives of the social housing charter and the specific themes on which we wished to focus.

Being the first council to take part in this challenge felt like both a great privilege and a daunting prospect. Like many councils, we never stop learning, and there are undoubtedly areas we can focus on when reviewing and reshaping our services.

As a council, we had a strong sense of where we should focus our efforts and resources. Having the opportunity to discuss these ideas, helping to shape a platform to assist other councils, and raising the profile of council housing were just a few of the positives highlighted throughout the peer challenge.

Beyond our own housing service,

## A new peer challenge

The social housing management peer challenge aims to help stock-holding councils meet the expectations of the social housing White Paper, 'The charter for social housing residents'.

Part of the LGA's government-funded sector support programme for councils, it supports councils to improve the service provided to social housing residents and identify and share best practice.

The peer challenge has been co-designed with the sector, and is delivered by a team of dynamic and experienced housing officers and member peers. The peers act as critical friends to assess the strengths of a council and its partners, and identify areas for improvement for the future.

Please visit [bit.ly/3tyegEO](https://bit.ly/3tyegEO) to find out more.

we see great value in the aims and objectives of reforming social housing. The insight and support the LGA facilitated through this peer challenge provided a unique opportunity to objectively review and test our thinking.

We would encourage other councils to take part – there is a new era on the horizon for social housing, and engaging in the challenge will help ensure council housing is leading the way.

**i** **South Holland District Council will be sharing its experience** of the social housing management peer challenge in the Innovation Zone at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate, on Thursday 30 June – see [www.local.gov.uk/conference](https://www.local.gov.uk/conference).

# Stronger together



## Becoming more self-sustainable



Councillor **Alistair Bradley** (Lab) is Leader of Chorley Council

It's been clear for some time that councils cannot operate in the way they always have and expect to be able to do what's best for residents.

With no direct grant from government, and losing around £3 million in funding over the past few years, we needed to be smart about how we managed the organisation and how we could work towards being more self-sustainable. Shared services have been key to achieving this.

By employing a shared chief executive and management structure, we have saved significant amounts while still being able to pay competitive salaries to recruit and retain the best people.

Our South Ribble neighbours were a natural fit as partners – a similar authority covering a similar type of area, and with whom we had a lot in common.

Our relationship began a decade ago, when we started to share finance staff, but has really evolved over the past few years, to the point where half our entire workforce is now shared.

This has saved Chorley around £500,000 in total and brought massive benefits for both authorities, while still allowing us to retain complete sovereignty as two separate councils making the best decisions for our respective boroughs.

Councils have been sharing services and senior staff for years, working together for the benefit of their local communities.

While the financial savings arising from a shared chief executive and/or wider joint working can be significant, shared management arrangements are not just about money.

Councils working in this way report gains in resilience and flexibility, and that they are better prepared to face the challenges of the future.

Every shared-management partnership is unique and we can gain knowledge and ideas from them all – see below and right to find out more about the experiences of Chorley and South Ribble, and Brentwood and Rochford.

## Real value for money



Councillor **Paul Foster** (Lab) is Leader of South Ribble Borough Council

These are difficult times for so many people, so it's never been more important that councils provide real value for money.

Sharing services with Chorley has saved us £644,000 in staffing costs, equivalent to an 8 per cent rise in council tax. Instead, we have been able to freeze our portion of the council tax bill for the past two years, leaving more money in residents' pockets.

Working so closely with our friends at Chorley – under the leadership of one chief executive and a single team of directors – has also enabled other efficiencies, increased the resilience of our services, and allowed us to share knowledge, expertise and best practice.

This all helps deliver exciting projects, such as our investment in local leisure, new affordable homes, a new extra care facility to support independent living, and the realisation of the transformational £25 million Leyland Town Deal – not to mention the renovation of Worden Hall, improvements at South Ribble Museum, and our new Music in the Park event. Without shared services, we simply wouldn't have



## An equitable partnership



Councillor **Chris Hossack** (Con) is Leader of Brentwood Borough Council and Chair of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), and Councillor **Simon Wootton** (Con) is Leader of Rochford District Council and Vice-Chair of ASELA

**C**reating a strategic partnership between Rochford District Council and Brentwood Borough Council was never on our radar, but when the opportunity arose, it just made sense, and we couldn't see a reason not to do it.

When we first began our conversation, Rochford was carrying a vacancy following the retirement of its chief executive and was interested in pursuing a shared arrangement. Jonathan Stephenson had been Chief Executive at Brentwood for about two years and his previous experience of working in a shared service (he had been a strategic director at Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils) gave us the confidence that it could be done.

We quickly realised that, even though the two authorities do not share an administrative boundary, there are numerous similarities between us.

As second-tier authorities in the ASELA Joint Committee ([www.southessex.org.uk](http://www.southessex.org.uk)), we share strategic interests and have comparable socio-economic dynamics, which mean there is a lot of commonality in our respective residents' interests.

But just because it could be done didn't mean it should be done.

We spent a lot of time building the political consensus between us. This partnership couldn't just be about sharing operational service delivery – it had to have a long-term strategic vision and purpose. It had to make us both better, stronger and amplify our profile in a way that we could not do alone.

This political ambition is reflected in the agreement between us for an equitable partnership that will bring financial savings and sustainability – along with organisational resilience to both councils – while retaining our independence and sovereignty of local decision-making, and maintaining our individual identity for our residents.

We trialled sharing the chief executive for six months, and that helped us to understand how the partnership could work in practice before making the decision to permanently appoint Jonathan as Joint Chief Executive in February this year.

His appointment has laid a strong foundation for a two-and-a-half-year transformation programme that will unify the workforce to create one team serving two councils.

The transformation has already begun and the top three tiers of the new 'one team' will be assembled this summer.

We recognise that a strong organisation comes from the talents that our people bring – a depth of skills and experience that is developed through collaboration and creativity. Getting our new leadership team in place will really start moving the partnership forward and delivering for our communities.

Although the partnership is still in its early stages, it offers greater combined capacity to manage change and deliver continuous improvement.

We are working together on our approach to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and levelling up agenda, along with a joined-up approach to mitigating the impacts of climate change. Together, we are tackling the big issues to achieve greater impact. We are hugely optimistic about the future.

**i** The LGA is holding a series of sessions for chief executives at its annual conference in Harrogate next week, including on 'Leading through a cyber incident' and 'Leading in a crisis', as well as hosting a welcome lunch for new chief executives. See [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference) to find out more and book your place.

had the capacity to deliver such an ambitious programme.

Yet we retain our own identity and autonomy – as evidenced by our recent decision to take waste services back into council control while Chorley's service remains outsourced. The additional skills, knowledge and resilience brought about by shared services has made this possible, and allowed us to in-source the running of local leisure centres, resulting in improved service for residents and better terms and conditions for staff.

All in all, we are thrilled with how shared services are working and we will continue to look for other ways we can work together for the benefit of our residents.



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**Josh Evans** is a Transport Planner and **Charlene Rohr** is Technical Principal with consultants Mott MacDonald



# Road pricing

What do councils want to replace motoring taxes with as part of the move to electric vehicles?

**A**s the UK transitions to electric vehicles, the £35 billion income that government receives from motoring taxes is set to decline dramatically. The Government has said it will ensure that this revenue continues to keep pace, however – so, what could replace the current system?

Road pricing has the potential to reduce congestion and car usage, and encourage more use of public and active travel. The Transport Select Committee recently recommended that the Government set up an arm's-length body to make proposals for a national road user charging system by the end of 2022.

In this context, the LGA asked Mott MacDonald to explore the views of councils, specifically seeking feedback on the committee's recommendations through interviews with a range of local authorities, including combined authorities and regional bodies.

We found that local authorities are just beginning to consider the implications of road pricing, but areas of clear agreement and disagreement emerged. The interviewees agreed that a new way is needed for electric vehicles to pay to use roads and that this should be a national road user charging system. It is imperative that this system is seen to be fair across social groups and regions, and between urban and rural areas.

Clarity on the resulting funding model was strongly desired and there was agreement that a portion of the funds generated from a national road-pricing system should be allocated to local authorities for transport investment.

One difference of views was around revenue neutrality. Some councils felt that imposing such a requirement was a missed opportunity to introduce charges that would better align with local transport objectives, particularly around reducing car travel. Others felt that revenue neutrality was absolutely necessary to sell a national road-pricing system to the public.

Several authorities welcomed the opportunity for local top-ups, where local authorities could generate additional funds from local charging systems on top of a national system. Others felt this could introduce unwelcome competition between regions.

Complexity was a key trade-off. Some interviewees argued that simple systems were essential for ease of implementation and public acceptance, while others felt that simple systems could miss the opportunity to be fairer or better align

with local transport objectives. Finally, there was some disagreement about the urgency of a national road-pricing system. Is a simple scheme needed urgently, or is a phased rollout better for this potentially controversial policy?

To stimulate discussion, we have proposed an outline of a system with three components: a 'revenue neutral' national road user charging system; a clear and long-term funding model with no authority worse off than now; and an optional 'top-up', with local authorities receiving the additional revenue they generate (see diagram).

Together, these would meet government fiscal goals, but also allow local authorities autonomy over whether local charges are generated and how funds would be used. No authority should be worse off than now, and a national scheme with local top-ups would reduce the risk of a patchwork of overlapping local and national charging systems.

The Transport Committee has asked the Government to respond to its recommendations by the end of the year. There is still time for local authorities to collect and put forward their views on a national road user charging system. We hope this work provides some direction for these conversations.



**The full report from Mott MacDonald will be available shortly** at [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

## A road-pricing model for local authorities:



### Component one:

'Revenue neutral' national road user charging system (compared with now)



### Component two:

Clear and long-term funding model consistent with current funding levels (no authority worse off than now)



### Component three:

Optional top-up with additional revenues generated by local authorities allocated to them

An independent review has called for a 'radical reset' of children's social care

# A revolution in family help



Councillor **Anntoinette Bramble** is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board

**C**ouncils want to do all they can to keep children and young people safe, and to help them thrive. The final report of the independent review of children's social care in England, published in May, recognises that councils are best placed to do that. It also recognises and builds on much of the excellent practice already taking place locally, while offering recommendations to tackle some of our most significant challenges.

This report reflects many issues that councils have been raising for some time, including: the need to invest further in early help for children and families; more support to keep children with their families wherever possible; better support for kinship carers; making sure that we have the right homes for children in care; and ensuring better futures for those leaving care.

There is much to support in this review. For example, it recognises the importance of tackling issues outside the remit of children's social care, but that impact on it, such as poverty and inequality, pressures on health visiting and social housing, domestic abuse, mental health, and immigration and asylum.

Without addressing these, the review is correct in its assertion that "reforms to children's social care risk treating the symptoms and not the cause".

We strongly support plans to improve information sharing between councils and their partners. This is an issue that too often features in serious case reviews and action is needed

to finally overcome the persistent challenges to improvement, including ensuring that information teams have the capacity and skills to make best use of data.

A 'National children's social care framework' will also give clarity to the sector, while providing a clear ambition with which all government departments and partners can align themselves.

Elsewhere, though, the LGA has concerns around plans for 'regional care cooperatives' (RCCs). While there is a clear argument for working

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*✧The recommendations require significant funds to deliver✧*

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collaboratively to provide specialist placements, and on more strategic issues such as market shaping, we are not convinced that RCCs will deliver the changes we need to see in the care market.

Many councils are already working collaboratively and seeing positive results, yet note that they are still unable to have significant influence over the largest private providers.

Councils, as corporate parents, are clear that they, working with partners and carers and listening to children and families, are best placed to identify the right home for each individual child they look after. Locally led solutions – rather than structures imposed from above, such as RCCs – allow councils to build on existing relationships and respond to local contexts.

Many areas already have strong regional or sub-regional, or local arrangements that have good relationships with local providers developed over many years. We would not want to see these lost. We must also recognise the very different challenges



that may be faced, for example, by a shire county compared with an inner-London borough.

While we welcome many of the recommendations in the review's final report, some issues cannot wait for delivery. In particular, we have significant concerns around placements for children in care who have the most complex needs, placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and workforce capacity.

The review's recommendations will require significant funding to deliver, and we urge ministers to provide the investment needed to reform services swiftly. We are keen to work with the Government to build and deliver an ambitious plan for implementation that will see long-standing improvements to services, while also tackling those issues that are increasingly risking the ability of councils to support children.

The Government has outlined its initial response to the care review and committed to delivering an "ambitious and detailed" response and implementation strategy by the end of the year.

Its three priorities for improving children's social care are to: improve the child protection system so that it keeps children safe from harm



as effectively as possible; support families to care for their children, so that they can have safe, loving and happy childhoods that set them up for fulfilling lives; and ensure that there are the right placements for children in the right places, so that those who cannot stay with their parents grow up in a safe, stable and loving home.

It has committed to: establishing a 'national implementation board' of sector experts and people with experience of the care system; working with councils to boost efforts to recruit more foster carers; improving support for social workers (especially early on in their careers); providing funding for family hubs and social workers in schools; and joining up data from across the public sector to increase transparency.

The LGA will work closely with its members over the coming months to develop and expand on its initial views of the review.

In the meantime, we want to work quickly with government and partners to identify elements of the report we can and should implement swiftly, and on planning the medium to long-term reform process. This must include

*✧ We want to identify elements that we can implement swiftly ✧*

commitment from Whitehall to tackle issues that children's social care cannot solve alone, including access to health services and ending child poverty.

As the report plainly acknowledges, reform and investment go hand in hand – one will not be effective without the other. This is why we are calling for a White Paper within the next six months to demonstrate the Government's commitment to reform, and truly transformational investment by the Treasury in the services that give all children the best start in life.



**This is a summary of the key findings of the independent review into children's social care in England** (see [www.childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk](http://www.childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk)) **and of the LGA's initial response to the review** (see [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)). The Government's response to the review is at [www.gov.uk/government/news/fundamental-shift-in-childrens-social-care-set-out](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/fundamental-shift-in-childrens-social-care-set-out)

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

# Consultation on **fire service** reforms

Proposals include changes to how local services are governed and more powers for fire chiefs

**A**s expected, the Government's long-awaited White Paper on fire service reform in England included proposals around changing the governance of local fire services.

Entitled 'Reforming our fire and rescue services: building professionalism, boosting performance and strengthening governance', it proposes changes in respect of the operational independence of chief fire officers, the introduction of new entry and promotion requirements, and a review of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.

In addition, it sets out proposals on ethics and for a new oath for employees, as well as proposals that will have a particular impact on county fire and rescue services.

The LGA believes it should be for local areas to determine how they are governed. Transfers of fire governance to police and crime commissioners (PCCs) or combined authority mayors should only be made where there is local agreement to the transfer.

While it is welcome that the transfers of governance are no longer mandatory, the Government's preferred governance model is one that has a single elected, preferably directly elected, executive leader.

The White Paper states this can be a mayor, PCC, or a county leader, where fire services already sit within a county council. The Government will discuss with local areas their governance preferences.

The LGA believes that there should be an opportunity to challenge and discuss the transfer of governance at a local level, so that there is assurance the community will receive the service that is right for it and issues around police and fire service borders

**i** See [www.local.gov.uk/topics/fire-and-rescue](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/fire-and-rescue) for more on the LGA's work on fire and rescue services. The consultation on the fire reform White Paper is available at [bit.ly/3NP5dY2](http://bit.ly/3NP5dY2)



can be considered from the outset. As with levelling up, real change and improvement within the sector and communities will be more successful if local councils and fire services are empowered to decide what their local governance structure will be, based on the needs of their communities.

The White Paper proposes changes to the relationship between chief fire officers (CFO) and their members, including giving the CFO operational independence and possibly establishing them as a 'corporation sole'. This would mean a CFO, in a similar way to police chief constables, would be a legal entity in their own right, occupying a single, incorporated office.

They would become the employer of firefighters and staff working for the service, and would also have legal authority over certain decisions and functions.

The question of corporation sole will, therefore, require careful examination, particularly for those fire services within county councils.

The political and operational leadership of fire services have distinct, but complementary, roles to play in delivering the services their communities want at a local level.

There will be times when both political and operational leadership will need to have an input into decisions that affect the running of the service. How this process works is best determined at a local level and this should not be undermined.

The White Paper contains a wide-ranging number of proposals, and will be discussed further at the LGA's Fire Commission and the Fire Services Management Committee.

The LGA will be submitting a response to the consultation on the White Paper, which ends on 26 July.

# Improving representation

Ahead of Disability Pride Month in July, the LGA is spotlighting its support for disabled councillors and candidates



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

**C**ouncillors play a vital role in shaping the future of their communities and improving the quality of life of local people.

We need people from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect the communities that they serve.

For Disability Pride Month (July), the LGA is putting the spotlight on our offer for disabled councillors and candidates.

This work, which is funded by the UK Government, is designed to increase the representation of disabled people in local politics and accelerate their development to become leaders in local government.

The offer includes a campaign to attract more disabled people to stand for council elections, a bespoke leadership development programme, and a coaching programme

focused on personal development.

Our 'Be a Councillor' programme ([www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor](http://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor)) inspires people who are passionate about their communities to stand for election and become local leaders.

As part of this, we have developed a bespoke national campaign to encourage disabled people to find out more about becoming a councillor.

We are taking a holistic approach to inspire a new generation of disabled councillors, but also recognise that there are practical considerations.

That is why we have developed a soon-to-be published guide for disabled councillors and a practical checklist for councils and political groups. These resources aim to increase awareness, accessibility and inclusion at every stage of becoming a councillor.

We are also excited to launch our new, bespoke leadership programme specifically for disabled councillors, shaped in partnership with the leading charity Disability Rights UK.

It is the first of its kind, and has been co-produced with disabled people and councillors, ensuring it responds to the specific needs of disabled leaders.



The carefully chosen topics and activities will take disabled councillors through a six-month journey of personal development, and will accelerate and develop their leadership skills so they can become resilient and confident local leaders.

The programme is cross-party, free to attend, and will begin in October at a two-day residential event. Places are limited, so make sure you express your interest early, by emailing [leadership@local.gov.uk](mailto:leadership@local.gov.uk).

Finally, coaching provides a powerful reflective space to grow and develop as leaders. Our highly effective coaching programme offers a cohort of 20 disabled councillors structured one-to-one conversations to support them to be brilliant leaders of their communities.

If you are a disabled councillor and would like to find out more about the LGA's offer, please get in touch.

Whether you'd like to book your place on our new leadership programme or take your development to the next level through coaching, please email [leadership@local.gov.uk](mailto:leadership@local.gov.uk).

## Disability Pride

July is Disability Pride Month, an international, annual event that celebrates disabled and chronically ill people, and raises awareness of outdated attitudes and stereotypes that need to change to combat ableism and discrimination.

Disability Pride is not commonly known, particularly in the UK, but the event works to shine a light on physical, learning, and hidden disabilities, and mental health conditions.

It enables people to have open conversations about disability by sharing experiences, raising awareness of the barriers and challenges the community faces, and celebrating diversity.

Historically, Disability Pride originated in the US, to mark the Americans with Disabilities Act civil rights law, prohibiting discrimination against disabled people, which was signed in July 1990.

**i** See [www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor](http://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor) for more information about the LGA's Be a Councillor programme, and [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/) highlighting-political-leadership for the LGA's wider support offer to councillors

# Support for new councillors

The LGA is here for you every step of the way in your journey as an elected member

**C**ongratulations on being elected as a councillor! The amount of information that you may be expected to become aware of, and understand, in the first few months of your role can often seem very overwhelming.

Your new role as a community champion and advocate will require you to respond to the varied needs and expectations of your local communities.

Gaining a good understanding of the challenges faced by residents and businesses has become increasingly important as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and deal with the ongoing consequences of the war in Ukraine and the rising cost of living.

As you begin your new role as a councillor, it will become even more important to embrace the challenges of building community and economic

resilience, driving the needs of your local residents and providing effective place-based leadership.

To support you in your new role, the LGA has developed a dedicated 'new councillor hub' ([www.local.gov.uk/new-councillor-hub](http://www.local.gov.uk/new-councillor-hub)), to provide you with the essential information you need as a newly elected member.

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

It outlines the support you can access from the LGA, and is intended to complement and support the advice and

training given to you through your own council's induction programme.

The hub offers a wealth of useful information on the wider structure of local government and on the key advice and support available to you from the LGA, nationally and regionally. It also outlines our important representational and lobbying role as your membership organisation.

We encourage you to make the most of all that the LGA offers. The hub is a great place to start to explore all that we have for you as newly elected members and in your continued development as councillors.

The hub outlines information about the support you can access from the LGA through our political group offices.

It also signposts you to the many training and development opportunities offered through our government-funded sector support offer, including our wide range of webinars, events, e-learning (see right), workbooks, and development programmes (see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer)).

*✧ Your new role will require you to respond to the varied needs of your local communities ✧*



## Councillor e-learning

Expand your political leadership skills with our free e-learning platform for councillors!

Now you're a councillor, completing our e-learning modules will deepen your knowledge of local government and help you build the leadership skills you need to work effectively with your communities.

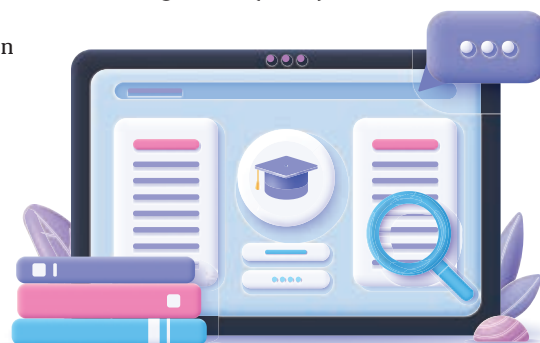
You can use the e-learning platform to create a bespoke learning programme – choosing the modules most relevant to your individual needs and interests, and fitting your learning around all your other commitments. To register please go to [bit.ly/3myyMBu](https://bit.ly/3myyMBu).

We've provided more details of two of our e-learning modules, on economic development and the LGA's Councillor Code of Conduct (see below).

We also offer modules on the following subjects:

- biodiversity for councils
- commissioning council services
- community engagement and leadership
- councillor induction
- equality, diversity and inclusion
- facilitation and conflict resolution
- handling intimidation
- holding council meetings online
- influencing skills
- licensing and regulation
- local government finance
- planning
- police and crime panels
- scrutiny for councillors
- stress management and personal resilience

- supporting mentally healthier communities
- supporting your constituents with complex issues
- the effective ward councillor
- UK general data protection regulation (GDPR).



## Councillor Code of Conduct

In your role as a councillor, you are expected to uphold high standards of conduct and always show good leadership.

The LGA's Model Councillor Code of Conduct sets out the general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. Under the Localism Act 2011, all councils are expected to have a code of conduct that outlines the expectations of the behaviours of councillors and co-opted members of the council, and how the council will deal with any conduct-related issues.

The fundamental aim of a code

is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of a councillor and local government.

The LGA's e-learning module provides an additional learning opportunity to the training and discussions around codes of conduct and standards of behaviour provided by your council. The module looks at the content of the LGA model code, the benefits of having a robust and clearly understandable code of conduct to underpin councillor and officer behaviours, and the principles behind that.

The module also looks at the consequences when a code of conduct is breached.

*Local government impacts the lives of citizens every day, providing essential services to those it serves. Its decisions directly affect the quality of life of local people. High standards of conduct in local government are needed to demonstrate that those decisions are taken in the public interest and to maintain public confidence.*

– The Committee for Standards in Public Life

## Economic development

At the heart of any council's work is the ambition to create and maintain a thriving local economy.

We all want to foster and provide local areas where people are healthy and happy and businesses are prosperous, where surroundings are pleasant and well used, and local people enjoy acceptable standards of living.

A healthy local economy underpins this ambition.

As councillors, you are champions not only of your local residents, but also the places in which they live. In your role as leaders of place, an understanding of economic development will help you in achieving this ambition.

Consideration of the economic growth needs and possibilities of our local areas will become ever more important as we seek to re-engage and reinvest in our local communities following the COVID-19 pandemic, and deal with the challenges faced by councils and their residents from the rising cost of living and changes to the way our residents and businesses

operate and live within their local areas.

The LGA's economic development e-learning module will enable you, as a councillor, to make a positive contribution to your local areas and communities.

It looks at what a thriving local economy may look like; the external influences and the role of government in good economic development; and how – from an understanding of the interaction of people, place, prosperity, partnerships and planning – councillors can help to influence and build better and more thriving local communities, to provide better places for people to live and work.



# AVC WISE

The fully managed AVC solution from PSTAX

## Empowering financial wellbeing for employees

Employers are looking for ways to support their employees through the cost of living crisis, and Shared Cost AVCs can give Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) members the power to make their money work harder, whilst enabling your organisation to make huge savings.



Kirklees Council have made substantial savings since partnering with AVC Wise on their own Shared Cost AVC scheme in June 2020:



**£258,337**  
Average monthly  
employee contributions



**£706,412**  
Total employer savings  
since June 2020

If you would like to support the financial wellbeing of your employees and make valuable organisational savings like Kirklees Council, contact us at [info@avcwise.co.uk](mailto:info@avcwise.co.uk) or call on **01252 959 779**.



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range of projects,  
grants and convening  
to promote a  
prosperous and  
sustainable fishing and  
aquaculture industry.*

# COMMENT



**Anna Kear** is Chief Executive Officer of Tonic Housing Association Ltd

## Living our lives out

**A couple of years ago, I heard a story about an older lesbian who had to move into a sheltered housing scheme – and who had started dating men to fit in.**

I had to ask myself, how is this still happening – that LGBTQ+ people have to go back into the closet and pretend not to be gay when they need sheltered housing or extra care as they get older?

When you wind that back, you can see why Tonic is needed.

Last year, we opened the UK's first LGBTQ+ retirement community at Bankhouse, an 'extra care' scheme in Lambeth, on the south bank of the Thames.

Tonic's first properties are available through the Older Persons Shared Ownership scheme, through which our residents part-own their flats and pay rent on the balance up to 75 per cent, while having the security of in-house care and support services.

More importantly, it's an LGBTQ+ affirmative and safe space, where it's just fine to be yourself.

It's been a long journey to get this far, and we are still learning. But we have some insights that other providers, including councils, might find helpful in respect of improving their housing offer for older LGBTQ+ residents.

We have a community panel of people interested in being future residents who gave me a shopping list of the things that are really important to them, and which we have at Bankhouse: community spaces, the bar (!), outside spaces, wheelchair accessibility.

But what came up time and time again was location – 'a place where we feel safe, and we identify with'.

LGBTQ+ communities are not necessarily 'geographical'. In London, LGBTQ+ people live all over the city and they navigate to places – pubs, clubs and bars – to find community. Where

community exists is not necessarily where they live, and a lot of people say they feel completely disconnected from their 'local' community.

Another thing people assume for older people – that their family will be there to support them with selling their homes, moving house, navigating the finances and the care requirements – doesn't always apply to LGBTQ+ people, who may have been ostracised by their families, and were not allowed to have children, back in the days of criminalisation.

Something we didn't even think of was that our customers just don't fit the rules. For example, you must be aged 55 or over to be eligible for one of our flats. We have had a few gay men couples come to us who have big age differences – something that happens a lot in gay relationships, but not so often in the heteronormative world.

We had a 92-year-old married to a 51-year-old interested in moving in. The 92-year-old needs this accommodation, but do they have to wait until he is 97 to move in? I don't think the rules were designed to exclude people in this way, but

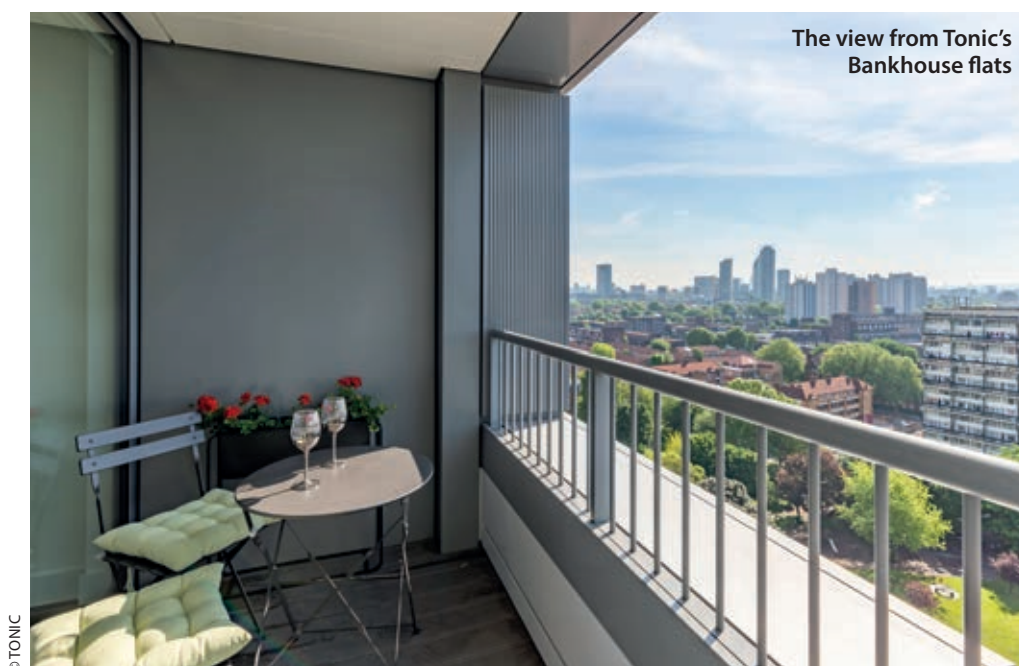
nobody would have ever considered that this situation could occur.

Our elders have lived different lives navigating what was, back then, a criminal offence, with people undergoing electric-shock conversion treatment. They have had to navigate an unconventional life around the system and now, at this stage, the last thing we want them to do is hit more system barriers.

As a provider and advocate for LGBTQ+ affirming supported housing, we are negotiating those barriers with our partners and trying to make the rules more inclusive and fairer – so no-one else has to go back in the closet as they get older.



*✧The last thing we want them to do is hit more system barriers✧*



**The view from Tonic's Bankhouse flats**

© TONIC



**Tonic is a community-led, not-for-profit organisation focused on creating vibrant and inclusive urban LGBTQ+ affirming retirement communities**, see [www.tonichousing.org.uk](http://www.tonichousing.org.uk)

## An opportunity to reflect



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

For the first time in three years, the showpiece event of the local government calendar will take place in person when we gather in Harrogate for the LGA's annual conference at the end of June.

We will meet in a world much changed from the summer of 2019 in Bournemouth, and this conference will provide an opportunity for us to reflect on the two seminal events that have occurred since then: the pandemic and Putin's war in Ukraine.

While I believe it is important to look forward and consider how we can build back better from COVID-19, we will no doubt take the opportunity to reflect on

the crucial role that local government played during the pandemic and the lessons that we can learn from that.

Equally, I am sure that we will be united in condemning Russia's atrocities in Ukraine and in expressing our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, including those who have found new homes here in the UK.

The conference will also provide an opportunity to discuss our response to the current cost-of-living pressures – which are overwhelmingly due to the re-opening of the global economy and the economic impact of the war in Ukraine – as well as more long-standing issues, such as the future of adult social care, civility in public life, levelling up, special educational needs and disabilities, planning, and local government finance, to name but a few.

The Conservative Group will hold three group meetings and a dinner on the Wednesday evening. Further details

about these events will be provided in our email bulletin just before the conference (see also [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference)). As usual, we will have a stand in the exhibition area, where you can meet the group office staff and find out more about our work.

The return to an in-person LGA conference marks an important milestone in our recovery from the pandemic, and I am really looking forward to seeing many of you in Harrogate for what promises to be a busy and enjoyable event.

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**“Annual conference will provide an opportunity to discuss our response to the current cost-of-living pressures, as well as more long-standing issues”**

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

## Making progress on housing and planning

There has been a flurry of government announcements in respect of housing and planning that, taken in the round, have started to address some of the issues that have long concerned the LGA and councils.

There is some really good stuff in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, including the first planning proposals I have seen in 10 years that look like moving us significantly forward on place-based planning in England.

In particular, and supporting a plan-led system, is that local plans will be given greater weight; and where there is an up-to-date local plan, the five-year housing supply criteria is met. There are also proposals to expedite local plans, and for a new, non-negotiable infrastructure levy which will be set locally; and further powers for councils to bring vacant properties back into use.

More recently, the Government has



committed to getting rid of 'no fault' evictions in the private rented housing sector in England – something the LGA and councils have long campaigned for – and to improving other protections for tenants in private sector housing.

Meanwhile, its Social Housing (Regulation) Bill would see the biggest social housing providers facing regular inspections, and unlimited fines for failing social housing landlords in England.

Councils want all residents to be able to live in safe and secure, high-quality housing, whether social or private, yet more remains to be done.

Plans to extend Right to Buy to housing association tenants may help more people to own their own homes, but

this cannot come at the cost of further reductions in the number of affordable social houses. Social housing supply is already insufficient to meet current demand, which is why councils want the powers to build 100,000 high-quality, climate-friendly social homes a year.

We also need further reform of Right to Buy, which has made it difficult for councils to build replacement council housing at the rate at which it is sold.

National permitted development rights – allowing conversion of offices, shops and restaurants into houses without the need to provide any affordable homes or infrastructure funding – also need to be removed, so councils can ensure the right homes are built in the right places.



Councillor **Shaun Davies** is Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

## The vital work of councillors

**I**t is a huge honour to have been elected as the new leader of the LGA's Labour Group and Labour's leader in local government.

Thank you to every Labour group that voted for me, which I'm delighted to say included groups from every region of England and Wales, and every type of council, both in power and in opposition.

It was great to receive such a strong mandate and I look forward to repaying your faith in me.

---

**"I've pledged to be a strong, active and inclusive voice for all hardworking Labour councillors"**

---

As a councillor in Telford and Wrekin for 11 years, and leader of Telford and Wrekin Council for six years, I know how vital the work of councillors is.

I look forward to representing Labour local government both as Senior Vice-Chair at the LGA and as local government's representative in Keir Starmer's Shadow Cabinet.

Keir has given me a warm welcome, and I'm pleased to already have been able to contribute on local government priorities.

I've pledged to be a strong, active and inclusive voice for all hardworking Labour councillors, and to provide more opportunities for us to come together, learn from one another and promote the very best practice.

I'll work to give Labour groups the tools we need to succeed in the town hall, and extra support for Labour groups to win more seats, and control more councils, in England and Wales.

I hope to meet as many local government colleagues as possible – of all parties – at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate at the end of June. Do come up and say hello!



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

## Action needed now on cost of living

**R**ecently, the Prime Minister addressed the cost-of-living and housing crises, outlining his plan to help the nation with household finances and home ownership.

His speech came a matter of days after a damaging no confidence vote, with analysts suggesting the measures on housing may be an attempt to rebuild his popularity.

His proposals were ill-thought out and lacking in detail, which, sadly, has become the norm from this government. The PM has offered a short-term solution to tackle a long-term problem.

Prices are rising across the country, with inflation hitting 9 per cent in April. Many families are struggling to make ends meet.

Millions have been plunged into poverty, with reports of food banks running low on donations, people skipping meals and households taking desperate measures to avoid using their heating.

With energy bills set to rise again in October, the cost-of-living crisis looks set to continue for some time. We are facing an emergency.

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**"The PM has offered a short-term solution to tackle a long-term problem"**

---

Those of us in local government are urging more action from the Government. It could start by immediately reducing the standard rate of VAT from 20 per cent to 17.5 per cent for one year, saving the average household a further £600.

It could reintroduce the pensions triple lock to support pensioners, and restore the universal credit supplement of £20, which was cancelled by the Government in September 2021. Councils should be reviewing all their support to residents to ensure they are getting the help they need at this difficult time.



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

## Right to buy makes it harder to find homes

**I** have been greatly concerned about the recent announcement to extend the Right to Buy scheme to social housing providers.

We discussed this issue at our last Independent Group think-tank discussion and concluded the announcement was probably to make (or divert) headlines, and to make money for government as they take their share of the proceeds of any sale.

What social housing provider is going to want to invest in building new houses if they are then forced to sell them at well below market rates, stripping them of their assets?

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**"Everyone should have a decent home they can afford"**

---

And what about community-led housing schemes such as community land trusts? Everyone should have a decent home they can afford.

There can be real benefits to renting through a housing association, not least because of the support services that are available.

It would appear the Government is encouraging more people on lower incomes to borrow money at a time when interest rates and inflation are rising, and to take on the ever increasing costs of running and maintaining a property. We see cases of that cost being often underestimated, resulting in some poorly maintained properties, or bank reclaims and homelessness.

Many people might find themselves better off with fewer financial obligations by renting rather than being owners, with the additional burden of paying for maintenance and structural repairs.

We need homes that are energy efficient, well looked after and affordable for more people to live in, not schemes that could take homes away from those most in need.



Councillor **Andrew Cooper** is an LGA Peer for Green Party councillors and a member of Kirklees Council

# Opportunity knocks!

Many councillors will be familiar with their council's corporate risk register, where threats to its core functions and financial health are identified and actions taken to mitigate these risks are detailed.

This is a totally necessary and responsible activity for any large public organisation that is charged with delivering vital local services.

There is a danger, however, that this reinforces the risk-averse culture that can exist in many councils, with an emphasis on playing it safe and giving an undue weight to risk avoidance – rather than taking opportunities.

In June, Sheffield City Council passed a resolution to establish a 'corporate opportunities register', to balance the attention given to risk and opportunity.

The motion, proposed by the Green Party group, said: "That to act as a balance to the corporate risk register, there should be a corporate opportunities register, detailing new funding opportunities, partnership opportunities and initiatives that will help deliver the council's objectives, such as supporting those affected by the cost of living crisis."

So, what might a corporate opportunities register look like?

First, you need to identify what the opportunity is.

Is it funding you can bid for from government or other sources? Is it a partnership with another organisation that might help you drive efficiencies and deliver better services? Is it a new activity that can help the council achieve its aims or generate an income stream?

Not all opportunities we could take should be taken. Perhaps the likelihood of success is low, or the effort expended simply not worth it.

But demonstrating that as an organisation we are aware of and tracking opportunities is important.



*Demonstrating that we are aware of opportunities is important*

It builds confidence and shows that officers and members are keen to look beyond the council's own resources to achieve its goals.

The real gain from establishing a corporate opportunities register is to show that the culture of the council is outward facing, ambitious for its people, entrepreneurial and dynamic.

Surely that is something we would like all our councils to be?



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



# Weathering the storm

## Local by-election defeats for the Conservatives may be reaching a critical point.

The yardstick is the early 1990s. Then, the party deposed Margaret Thatcher and watched a surprise General Election victory from her replacement, John Major.

Within months, however, the Conservatives faced economic challenges, the electoral impact of which became clear with mounting losses in both local and parliamentary by-elections.

In 1992, the Conservatives were losing one in four council by-elections. A year later, it was losing half its seats and, by 1994, losses were running at two in every three. The party's overall share of council seats dipped to 19 per cent, which remains its lowest share, and, in 1997, the party experienced one of its worst ever General Election defeats.

Do recent Conservative losses suggest a repeat of these events? The party is currently losing almost half the seats it is defending, double the rate for 2021. The decline between 2021-22 is identical to that for 1992-93.

But there may be a crucial difference between the past and present.

Blair's Labour Party was a much more formidable local government opponent than the party is currently. The Conservatives are losing seats at an alarming rate, but defeat is dealt by multiple foes.

Labour easily gained the Conservative seat in West Auckland, Durham, which was split in the 2021 election, with two

other gains on Brighton & Hove and Lewes councils.

Liberal Democrat success came in Surrey Heath's Bisley & West End ward before the 5 May local elections. With no UKIP, Labour or Independent candidates contesting the vacancy, electors were left with a straight choice, with votes splitting two to one in Liberal Democrat favour.

There was something similar in Carlisle's Longtown & the Border ward, with the vacancy not contested by Green, Labour and UKIP – all challengers

at the previous election. The Liberal Democrats enjoyed a comfortable win there, while adding Vale of White Horse's Steventon & the Hanneys ward and the previously unopposed Conservative seat in Sevenoaks' Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone ward to their tally.

The Greens also continue to unseat Conservatives, taking Laleham and Shepperton Green in Spelthorne and Lancaster City Council's Ellet ward.

North Kesteven's Sleaford Quarrington & Mareham ward voted for two Conservatives and an Independent in 2019. The Independent interest in this by-election was provided by the Lincolnshire Independents, who unseated the Conservatives by the slender margin of just six votes.

As first was going to press, it was looking highly likely that the Conservatives would lose two parliamentary by-elections – one to Labour, another to the Liberal Democrats.

Whether the party can weather the current storm may well be determined by its local rivals deciding which among them has the best prospect of inflicting defeat. If that happens, then the coming months will see the decline accelerate.

## Local by-elections

### Brighton & Hove, Rottingdean Coastal

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
2.0% over Ind Turnout 43.9%

### Carlisle, Longtown & the Border

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
13.6% over Con Turnout 37.9%

### Durham, West Auckland

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
23.7% over Con Turnout 25.8%

### Lancaster, Ellet

GREEN GAIN FROM CON  
9.4% over Lab Turnout 37.8%

### Lewes, Peacehaven West

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
15.0% over Con Turnout 28.1%

### Maldon, Heybridge West

LIB DEM GAIN FROM IND  
27.5% over Con Turnout 19.1%

### North Kesteven, Sleaford Quarrington & Mareham

LINCS IND GAIN FROM CON  
0.4% over Con Turnout 22.8%

### Rutland, Uppingham

LIB DEM GAIN FROM GREEN  
28.0% over Ind Turnout 39.5%

### Sevenoaks, Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
8.7% over Con Turnout 32.8%

### Spelthorne, Laleham and Shepperton Green

GREEN GAIN FROM CON  
7.3% over Con Turnout 29.1%

### Staffordshire Moorlands, Cheadle South East

CON GAIN FROM IND  
2.8% over Lab Turnout 27.9%

### Surrey Heath, Bisley & West End

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
32.0% over Con Turnout 30.5%

### Vale Of White Horse, Steventon & the Hanneys

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
22.6% over Con Turnout 49.5%

### Waverley, Frensham Dockenfield and Tilford

IND GAIN FROM CON  
11.8% over Green Turnout 35.4%

## CORRECTION

In a table in 'Going to the polls' in **first** 671 (May 2022), we incorrectly stated that the Green Party controlled one council and had 208 councillors in Wales before 5 May. These figures were in fact for Plaid Cymru. We apologise for this mistake and the upset caused.

**i** Only by-elections in which a ward changed hands are shown here. For all recent by-election results and more information, visit [www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections](http://www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections)



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