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LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

4-6 July 2023

Bournemouth
International
Centre



www.local.gov.uk/conference

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Financial uncertainty

With rising inflation, energy and other costs undermining councils' budgets, the LGA is calling on ministers to ensure local government is funded to meet ongoing pressures and protect the services that will be vital to achieving their ambitions for growth and helping residents through this cost-of-living crisis (p10).

The economic outlook dominated the party conference season, and we have reviews of both the Conservative (p12) and Labour (p13) events – the latter from Lisa Nandy, Shadow Secretary for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

At our fringe debates, the LGA focused on supporting communities through the rising cost of living and into economic recovery (p9). These discussions look set to continue at the LGA Independent Group Annual Conference 2022 in London on 28 October (p14).

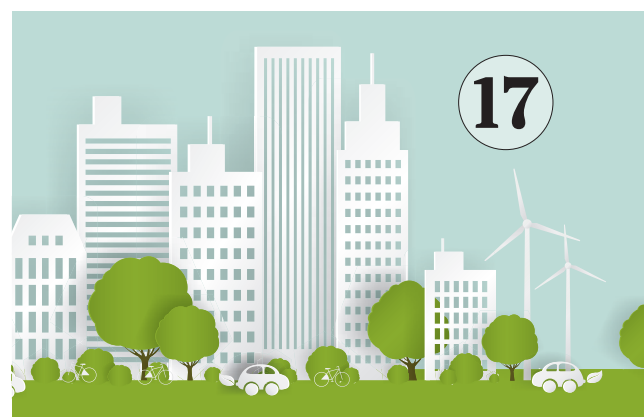
Elsewhere in this month's **first**, we look at the benefits of 'good' local jobs (p11); local action on climate change a year after COP26 in Glasgow (p16); the LGA's support for disabled candidates and councillors (p23); and a new e-learning module for councillors on corporate parenting (p30).

As ever, for the latest news and updates from the LGA, please visit our website (www.local.gov.uk/uk) and follow us on social media at #LGACOMMS and #LGAnews.

Cllr James Jamieson
is LGA Chairman



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Councils call for £13bn for adult social care

The LGA has called on Prime Minister Liz Truss to deliver on her pledge to find £13 billion for adult social care, amid warnings that one in five care workers are living in poverty.

Ms Truss assured councils during her leadership campaign that she would find £13 billion for the sector to replace the health and social care levy.

Social care is in dire need of a comprehensive rescue package, according to the LGA, with waiting lists of more than 500,000 for care assessments and care and vacancies estimated to be over 165,000 across all roles in the sector.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "The new PM can make a dramatic improvement to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by delivering on this promise.

"Social care's lack of capacity to deliver

the care that people need to live their life is being seen in higher waiting lists and people not getting the care they need, with impacts on the NHS. The Government needs to step in now.

"If it doesn't, we can expect one of the most challenging winters in recent times, with severe knock-on effects that will continue to significantly impact on people and their loved ones."

Recent reports have underlined the fragile state of social care, with the charity the Health Foundation reporting that one in five residential care workers are living in poverty, and Skills for Care's annual report identifying a record 165,000 care staff vacancies.

"Ensuring that care workers are paid fairly for their work is central to making a career in care affordable and appealing, as well as ensuring people who draw on care are best able to live an equal life," said Cllr Fothergill.



"This is why we have called on the Prime Minister to deliver on her pledge to provide £13 billion. Of this, £3 billion is needed to improve care worker pay and help recruit and retain staff."

● See p28

Cost pressures threaten local services

Councils will have no choice but to implement significant cuts to services unless the Government provides extra funding to meet demand and cost pressures, the LGA has warned.

It has calculated that councils

face extra cost pressures this year of £2.4 billion because of rising inflation, increases in the National Living Wage and higher energy costs – increasing to estimated funding gaps of £3.4 billion in 2023/24 and £4.5 billion the year after.

The LGA is calling for a long-term government plan to manage the crisis in councils' finances and has warned against cutting their funding.

Government departments have been asked to find 'efficiency savings', amid

ongoing political, economic and financial uncertainty and, as **first** was going to press, the replacement of Kwasi Kwarteng as Chancellor by former Health and Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "Local government has great ambition to get on with the job of building homes, creating jobs, supporting businesses and investing in new infrastructure.

"However, massive increase in costs due to spiralling inflation and National Living Wage rises risk undermining those ambitions, by forcing councils to cut local services to meet their legal duty to balance the books.

"Government will need to step in to ensure councils have the funding to meet these ongoing pressures, in order to protect the services that will be vital to achieve its ambitions to produce a more balanced economy."

● See p10, p28



Social rent cap 'could cost councils £3bn'

Capping social housing rent increases at 5 per cent a year could cost councils more than £3 billion in five years, the LGA has warned.

In response to a government consultation – which suggests a 5 per cent cap, with a 3 or 7 per cent cap also considered – the LGA, alongside the Association of Retained Council Housing and National Federation of ALMOs, commissioned real estate services company Savills to estimate the loss of income.

It found that a 5 per cent cap would cost £1.16 billion in the first two years, rising to more than £3 billion within five years and potentially £45 billion over the next four decades, as

the rent cap changes the baseline for future rent increases.

While councils support moves to keep rents low, rent caps will not directly benefit the majority of council tenants because they receive housing benefit.

Instead, it will be a saving for the Department for Work and Pensions, while councils will have to cope with the additional financial burden of lost income.

The loss of funding would slow down or halt essential house-building projects, key maintenance and improvement works, and retrofitting of existing stock in pursuit of net

zero goals and more energy-efficient homes.

The LGA said decisions around social rent should remain with councils to ensure a balance between improvements and affordability for tenants, and the Government will need to provide funding to cover the loss of income.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "With more than one million people on council house waiting lists and the retrofitting of existing housing stock key to the country's net zero goals, imposing a cap without compensating councils for lost income would have a hugely detrimental impact on those efforts."



Social care complaints down

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about adult social care services have gone down – but more are being upheld compared with other complaints.

Ombudsman Michael King has also highlighted that the cost of providing care has become an increasingly common theme in the complaints made to him over the past year.

According to his Annual Review of Adult Social Care 2021-22, which covers council and independent care complaints, the Ombudsman upheld 70 per cent of the adult social care cases investigated – compared with 66 per cent of complaints about other council services.

However, since the last comparable year before the pandemic, the Ombudsman has received 16 per cent fewer complaints about adult care as a whole.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said the report added to the "growing evidence showing how critically underfunded social care is", and reiterated the LGA's call for the Prime Minister to deliver on a promised £13 billion for the sector (see p4).

He added: "Councils and care providers have worked tirelessly to keep vital care and support services going over the past year and continue to do so, despite significant and worsening financial and workforce challenges.

"It's positive to see an overall decrease in the number of complaints, and it is right that providers and councils continue to work with the Ombudsman in its investigations to make improvements to their services."

Homeless Ukrainian numbers rising

The number of Ukrainian new arrivals presenting to their councils as homeless is continuing to rise, with the latest government figures showing 670 households in temporary accommodation nationwide.

For the first time, the Homes for Ukraine scheme has overtaken the family scheme in the number of homelessness duties owed, indicating an increasing number of sponsors are leaving the scheme as the six-month initial sponsorship period comes to an end.

As **first** was going to press, it was reported that the Government has rejected calls to increase payments to UK households hosting Ukrainian refugees, despite hopes that this would encourage people to prolong their participation.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "We are deeply concerned at the growing number of Ukrainians presenting as homeless to their council and, in particular, the significant rise in the number of those who arrived through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

"It is absolutely crucial that support to sponsors is enhanced as inflation and energy costs increase, so new or existing hosts are encouraged to sponsor in the longer term.

"Council housing and homelessness services are already under significant pressures and further increases may mean families are forced to move into temporary accommodation away from the new schools, jobs and communities they have been building since they arrived.

"Councils will continue to do all they can to help those who are owed homelessness duties but need urgent solutions to pressing housing needs in the short and the long term across all the schemes that welcome new arrivals to the UK."

Childhood vaccination rates fall

The number of children getting vaccinated against a range of preventable diseases dropped in 2021/22 compared with the previous year, according to new NHS statistics.

The figures reveal a decrease in all 13 vaccine coverage measures of between 0.2 and 1.1 per cent, with no vaccine meeting the World Health Organization (WHO) target of 95 per cent of coverage for all eligible children.

Coverage for the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine for children at 24 months was 89.2 per cent in 2021/22, a decrease from 90.3 per cent in 2020/21.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board said: "Vaccines are an absolutely essential part of our children's health and wellbeing.

"They prevent serious life-threatening illnesses, and councils, along with their partners in schools and the NHS, work hard to ensure everyone has access to vaccination who needs it.

"These new statistics, revealing that we are still not reaching the WHO's 95 per cent targets for vaccination coverage, are particularly concerning and also show considerable regional disparities.

"Local services are working hard to catch up on backlogs related to COVID-19 and ensure that people, including babies, children and pregnant women, still receive their routine vaccinations.

"Councils and their local directors of public health encourage parents to check if their child needs any vaccinations to make sure they are properly protected against serious preventable illness."



NHS 'dental deserts' in rural and deprived areas

The LGA has called on the Government to address shortages in NHS dentists, with more deprived or rural councils having fewer dentists than more affluent areas.

LGA analysis of data collected by the Care Quality Commission and published on LG Inform, the LGA's local area benchmarking tool, shows that no local authority area has more than one dentist per 1,000 of the population providing affordable NHS treatment.

The top 10 council areas for shortages mainly have higher than average levels of deprivation or of residents in rural areas.

There are wide variations in the availability of NHS dentists, with the City of Westminster having more than six times the number of NHS dentists per 1,000 of population compared with Ashfield, the area with the lowest number in the country.

To tackle the growing shortage of NHS dentists, the LGA has urged ministers to reform the dental contract and ensure the £762 million clawback taken by the Treasury over the past 10 years from dental practices is reinvested into subsidised dental treatments.

Dentists are commissioned by NHS England to provide treatment, although

it is the responsibility of councils to run programmes to promote good oral health and prevent problems, particularly among children.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "As we continue to feel the effect of the cost-of-living crisis, a lack of NHS dentists could risk people choosing to forgo routine dental treatments or even resort to DIY dentistry, risking more costly emergency dental treatments being needed further down the line.

"Councils need a real-terms increase in their public health grant so they can provide vital oral health improvement programmes to prevent longer-term health problems."

● LG Inform, see <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>. See also p22



Heatwaves cause excess deaths

More than 2,800 excess deaths of people aged 65 and over were recorded in England during this summer's heatwaves, according to latest figures from the UK Health Security Agency.

Statistics published by the Office for National Statistics show that the number of people who died across all age groups during that time period was 6.2 per cent higher compared with the five-year average.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board said: "As these new statistics show, the most recent period of extreme heat represented a significant health risk to those who are older or have a health condition that places them at greater risk.

"These conditions include heart conditions, diabetes, respiratory or renal

insufficiency, Parkinson's disease or severe mental illness.

"The Met Office has predicted that hotter and drier summers could be likely to become more common as heat records are being broken more frequently, with all the challenges this brings to councils and the communities that we support.

"We must start to adapt to ensure our residents, our homes and buildings, and our local infrastructure can remain as resilient as possible to the threat of extreme weather.

"As well as this, the Government must work with councils and others to turbo-charge efforts to bring down carbon emissions and achieve our net zero targets, limiting further temperature increases in the future."

Leaky homes 'could cost taxpayers billions'

New LGA analysis suggests poorly insulated homes will leak £12.7 billion of energy over the next two years, with a third of that cost being incurred by the Government under its Energy Price Guarantee.

Homes with an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower will have an average of £488 of heat a year escaping out of poorly insulated doors, windows, roofs and walls.

While families in inefficient homes will lose £8.6 billion over the two years of the Energy Price Guarantee, the costs incurred by government could increase if energy prices rise as projected next year.

The most wasteful homes in England are older and more likely to be occupied by older people and those on lower incomes, with more than 60 per cent of over-65s living in England's least energy-efficient homes.

Owner-occupied and private rented homes

are almost twice as likely to be rated EPC D or below than social homes.

The LGA is calling for the Government to renew its partnership with councils to better draught proof, insulate and retrofit all homes and accelerate the shift to renewable energy, as well as give residents energy saving advice.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, said: "Retrofitting more homes is a practical, sustainable and economically responsible solution to keep many people warmer and safer through winters.

"Investment now will save households and taxpayers money further down the line, ease the cost-of-living crisis, reduce the health crisis for people in cold and damp homes, and mean families have added security and flexibility within their budgets.

"Councils are eager to help the Government deliver on this win-win-win agenda as fast as possible."



Drivers 'unhappy' with EV charging

Around 74 per cent of electric vehicle owners are unhappy with the state of charging infrastructure, according to a recent report from the consumer company Which?

The report, based on a survey of almost 1,500 Which? members who own an electric vehicle (EV) or plug-in hybrid vehicle, found that nearly half (48 per cent) of drivers who use public charging infrastructure find it a challenge to find a charging point in good working condition. Meanwhile, four in 10 (40 per cent) reported that they have experienced a non-working charger, while 43 per cent have faced 'technical issues' with charging points.

Which? has called on the Government to extend the planned reliability standard for rapid charge points to cover all public charge points, to drive improvements across the entire infrastructure.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Transport Spokesperson, said: "Electric vehicles will have a growing importance in the country's journey towards reducing greenhouse emissions from the way we travel.

"Councils are already working with government and industry on planning and delivering for the ever-growing demand for cleaner transport.

"Reliability and ease of use of the charging infrastructure will be vital to continue attracting more people to make the switch to greener transport.

"Councils need long-term financial support from government so they can help ensure there are robust and accessible local charging networks to help our communities and businesses to adopt cleaner travel and tackle climate change."

Expert help to overcome housing challenges

Councils can apply for up to £20,000 from an LGA programme to pay for independent experts to help with housing projects.

The Housing Advisers Programme funds bespoke expert support for councils, or groups of councils, wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes, and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness.

For the first time, the programme – now in its sixth year – will provide support to councils

that are keen to lead on the delivery of new housing but do not have a track record in that area.

It has so far supported more than 150 projects across England, helping councils build homes, reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, plan for ageing populations, understand the student housing market, and increase the supply of modular housing.

Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "Councils can play a key role in supporting growth from the bottom up by building new homes and tackling our housing shortage.

"The Housing Advisers Programme has been a striking success since it was launched six years ago, helping councils deliver local priorities by tapping into the expert advice they need to innovate and improve the delivery of homes, tackle the root causes of homelessness and deliver efficient and locally led place-making.

"We would recommend all councils take a look at the programme as there are ways it can bring benefits to every local area across England."

● Applications close on 24 November, see bit.ly/3CRCaAj



In brief

Overweight children

One in five children who started primary school a healthy size is leaving overweight or obese, according to the National Child Measurement Programme. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, called for greater powers for councils to restrict take-aways and ban junk food advertising near schools, for more families on low incomes to receive Healthy Start food vouchers (see right), and for more children to be eligible for free school meals. He added: "Councils are working to support children and families to live healthy lives and reduce pressure on other public services, from health visitors supporting new parents to weight management services and subsidised leisure facilities, but more needs to be done, especially to reduce the gap between the most and least deprived."

Access to elected office

The LGA has published new guidance under its Be a Councillor campaign to encourage more people to stand in local elections. 'Improving access to local government elected office for disabled people', created with the help of disabled councillors, covers key areas of the role and includes a range of advice and practical steps to overcome barriers and support candidates through the process.

● See p23

Hospital discharges

The Government has announced £500 million to help the social care sector with discharging hospital patients as part of its 'Plan for patients'. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This funding will be significant over the winter months. We are pleased to see the importance of social care being recognised in improving this service, but it is vital to remember that social care has huge value to people's lives in its own right. Adult social care will remain in a crisis state until a comprehensive plan is in place to fully fund the care needed. Councils and care providers cannot continue relying on last-minute, short-term allocations of funding."



The LGA has set out a five-point plan to improve the Government's Healthy Start voucher scheme and increase take-up, as new analysis reveals that nearly 150,000 eligible families are currently missing out on them.

The vouchers are for pregnant women and families with children aged under four who are on benefits, and can be used to buy milk, infant formula, fruit, vegetables and pulses.

LGA analysis of NHS data suggests that, on average, those areas with higher overall levels of deprivation have lower take up of the vouchers.

The vouchers have also failed to reflect rises in food prices, with the cost of staple items such as milk and tomatoes rising from between 21 and 47 per cent since prices were set for the vouchers in April 2021.

The LGA is calling for an increase in the value of Healthy Start vouchers in line with

inflation, an expansion of the scheme to include all families on universal credit and children who are aged five, and an easier registration system.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board said: "Every year millions of pounds of vital Healthy Start vouchers go unclaimed and families miss out on free fruit, vegetables and milk."

"At this challenging time of rising food prices and overall cost of living, we need government to ramp up efforts to ensure all eligible families can access healthy and nutritious food to give children and babies the best start in life."

Councils are also calling for more up-to-date data on the vouchers, so they can better understand take-up rates in their areas and the impact of the transition to digital vouchers.

Vital role of culture highlighted

Councils are highlighting the positive impact of cultural and creative services across key government objectives of economic growth, productivity, levelling up and health, as part of the LGA's Commission on Culture and Local Government.

The LGA has launched an online case study database, showcasing more than 50 examples of councils and their cultural sector partners using innovation to address the four themes of the commission: sustainable and inclusive economic recovery; health inequalities; social mobility through cultural education and creative skills; and place.

The independent commission was launched in March of this year, chaired by Baroness Lola Young, and aims to explore the role locally funded culture can play in

supporting recovery from the pandemic.

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: "Local cultural infrastructure is essential to ensuring the widest engagement with culture, supporting community wellbeing and productivity, underpinning local economies and contributing to civic pride, but is currently under threat as a result of rising costs."

"Councils understand that we are facing a cost-of-living crisis, but these integral services must not only be preserved but invested in to support economic, health and creative recovery from the pandemic. These excellent case studies highlight just how vital culture can be in our communities."

● See www.local.gov.uk/commission-culture-and-local-government

PARLIAMENT

Promoting council priorities

Government ministers and the Leader of the Opposition attended LGA events at their party conferences

It has been another successful party conference season at the LGA.

We held receptions at the Labour and Conservative conferences in Liverpool and Birmingham, which allowed our members to catch up after what has proven to be another busy year for local government.

This year we focused our fringe debates – sponsored by Google – on supporting communities through the rising cost of living and into economic recovery.

Prior to party conference, the LGA launched its cost of living hub, which features the fantastic work councils are already doing to support their residents during these difficult times (see www.local.gov.uk/cost-living-hub).

At our Labour Party conference debate, Mike Amesbury MP, former

Shadow Minister for Local Government, considered how councils working with government and partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors can collaborate to address cost-of-living pressures, reducing the need for emergency support.

John Park, Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy at Google Cloud, highlighted the range of skills programmes Google offers and how this can help communities by upskilling and reskilling residents. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, LGA Labour Group Deputy Chair, who chaired the debate, shared Hackney council's experience of working with Google during the pandemic.

Other speakers included Olivia Bailey, Director at policy and research consultancy Public First, and Cllr Shaun Davies, Leader of the LGA's Labour Group, who praised the LGA's cost of living hub.

As usual, the LGA sponsored the Association of Labour Councillors' drinks reception. Attendees heard from Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Opposition, who thanked councillors for their work in the local elections and the support they continue to provide to their communities, despite the challenges they currently face.

At the Conservative Party conference debate, led by LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson, attendees heard from Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group; John Park from Google Cloud; and Nick Park, Director at Public First.

The panel praised the work of councils and called for greater devolution as councils know their local economies best and are therefore more qualified to provide the right support to their residents.

Cllr Seccombe also noted the LGA's cost of living hub as an excellent resource for councillors.

The LGA Conservative Group drinks



reception was attended by three ministers from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Dehenna Davison, Paul Scully and Lee Rowley.

All three praised councillors for their work leading their communities, recognising the financial challenges they are facing, and spoke about their own priorities to work closely with councillors to drive positive change in local areas.

The ministers took the time to network with councillors at the reception and throughout the conference, hearing their priorities for their local areas.

The LGA also hosted a drinks reception at the Green Party's conference in Harrogate, and Cllr Marianne Overton, Leader of the LGA's Independent Group, gave a speech praising the success of Green councillors and highlighting the support the LGA can offer to them.

Following the cancellation of their autumn conference, we are exploring other ways to ensure Liberal Democrat councillors can come together and discuss ideas and share best practice in the coming weeks and months.

Beyond party conferences, we continue to promote the priorities of local government in Parliament.



i For more information about the LGA's parliamentary work, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament. See also p12, p13 and p14 for more on the Conservative, Labour and Independent conferences

Councils need financial certainty to maintain public services and help deliver growth

On a cliff edge



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

The news that government departments have been tasked with identifying efficiency savings from public sector budgets has sent a collective shiver down the spine of local government.

It comes at a time when the future financial sustainability of councils and local services is already on a cliff-edge.

Recent signs had been encouraging, with the Government using last year's Spending Review to rightly ensure councils had enough funding to meet the extra cost pressures they were expecting to face this year and keep services standing still, at least.

However, the dramatic rise in inflation has undermined councils' budgets. Alongside increases to the National Living Wage and higher energy costs, this has added at least \$2.4 billion in extra costs onto the budgets councils set in March this year.

While recent announcements on the energy cap and national insurance rise are helpful, these only go a small way to bridge the gap.

Councils are now having to try to find ways to meet these costs this year and

limit the damage to the local services that so many people rely upon.

Some are planning to use reserves to plug funding gaps, stop capital projects or make cutbacks to services to meet their legal duty to balance the books this year.

However, with local government facing a funding gap of \$3.4 billion in 2023/24 and \$4.5 billion in 2024/25, the Government needs to come up with a long-term plan to manage this crisis.

Inflation is not going to come down overnight; reserves can only be spent once; a local service cannot be cut twice.

✧The dramatic rise in inflation has undermined councils' budgets✧

In the past decade, councils have done more than their fair share of the heavy lifting when it came to putting public finances on a more sustainable footing, having faced a \$15 billion real terms reduction to core government funding between 2010 and 2020.

The Government needs to ensure councils have the funding to meet ongoing pressures and protect the services that will be vital to achieve its ambitions for growth and to produce a more balanced economy, level up

communities and help residents through this cost-of-living crisis.

Alongside adequate funding, having certainty to plan is just as vital. Financial turbulence and uncertainty are as damaging to councils as they are for our businesses and financial markets.

For the past four years, councils have had to rely on one-year funding settlements. At the LGA's annual conference in June, the then Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove promised the next local government finance settlement in December would be for two years.

Days later he was gone, but this is a promise that we urge our new Secretary of State, Simon Clarke, to deliver on.

Without this, councils may end up planning on the assumption that they will have less funding available to them than is actually the case, needlessly scaling back services and making redundancies.

Without certainty of adequate funding for next year and beyond, and given the funding gaps councils are seeing, councils will have no choice but to implement significant cuts to services including to those for the most vulnerable in our societies.

But with certainty and long-term funding – to cover increased cost pressures and invest in local services – councils can make innovative and meaningful decisions over their finances, change lives and communities for the better, alleviate pressures on other parts of the public sector and support growth.

Better employment opportunities can help local economies and communities thrive

A good job



Councillor **Kevin Bentley** is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board

For many of us, much of the time, work is just a job. But good work can be so much more than this.

Work that can provide decent pay and security, where we have a voice and good relationships, and that gives us the opportunity to use our skills and to develop new ones, is good for people, the economy, local communities and places.

It can be supportive of good health and wellbeing, raise incomes and reduce poverty, support stronger economic growth and better business, and help build more inclusive communities.

So, the LGA has developed some new resources that set out the case for good work and how local government can take this forward – and often already does.

Our 'Good Work Project' explores what is good work, the local benefits it can bring, what's in it for employers, how local government can support good work, and provides top tips for councils and case studies, such as the Greater Manchester Good Work Charter.

For local communities, the benefits of good work will be obvious.

Better work means higher levels of local employment, a stronger local economy and greater economic prosperity.

Increasing levels of good work also has the potential to greatly support improved health and wellbeing among a local population and reduce pressures on associated support services. However, it is also critically important to ensure that those who aren't in good work – either because they are in jobs with poor conditions or aren't in employment at all – are getting access to the skills

and support to move into those jobs.

By doing this we can also reduce inequalities and support greater social inclusion.

Within public policy debates, a lot is said about raising the aspirations of people entering the workforce, but far less about raising the aspirations of employers.

Encouraging employers to work towards good work goals can normalise better working conditions and catalyse change in what is viewed as acceptable.

As place leaders, councils and combined authorities are becoming increasingly central in supporting the development of good practice at a local level; in understanding the interconnections of the local socio-economic, labour market, educational, and business contexts; and in leading on the development and implementation of economic and social growth policies.

Local government is therefore uniquely placed to support the

good work agenda and ensure that employment opportunities can help local economies and communities thrive.

Councils and combined authorities have a range of levers at their disposal to do this.

As well as being major employers responsible for offering good quality work to thousands of public sector workers, they have extensive purchasing power and wider influence over local employers.

When coupled with their insight into local economic, skills, employment, environmental and other community needs, councils and combined authorities can help support positive change.

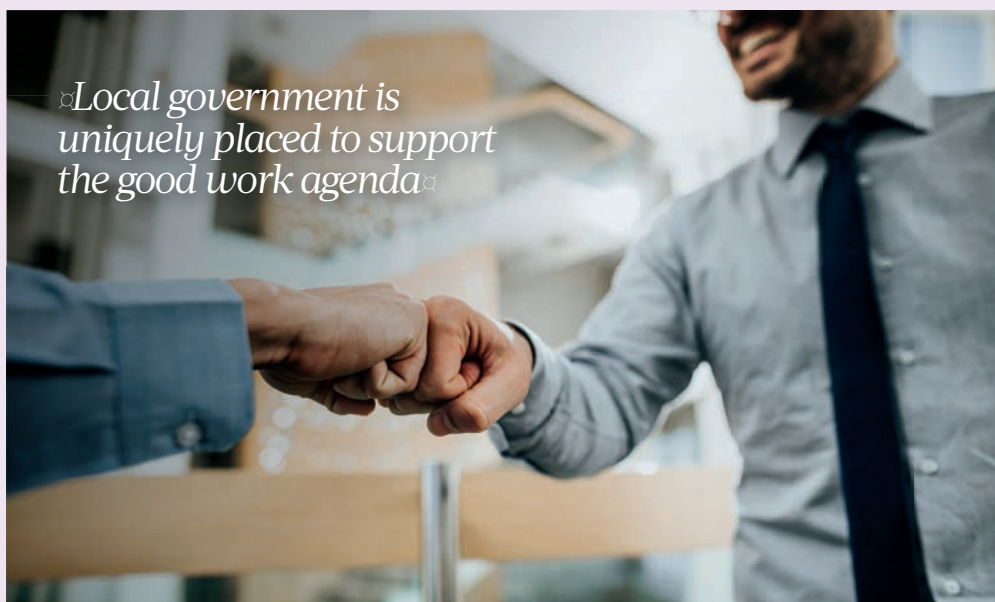
Good work charters, creating social value through procurement and grant giving, and offering local business support are just some of the practical ways they can do this, such as Durham's close collaboration with local suppliers and development of the County Durham Pound. The LGA's 'Good Work Project' provides more guidance on these.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the opportunities and challenges of technological change, net zero and flexible working already leading to lasting changes in our economy and society, arguably delivering on good work has never been more important.



To read the LGA's 'Good Work Project' in full, please visit www.local.gov.uk/good-work-project

Local government is uniquely placed to support the good work agenda



Engaging with stakeholders

Councillors met new ministers at LGA events at the Conservative Party conference



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

© GETTY / Jeff J Mitchell

As ever, party conference provided the ideal opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues from across the country while also discussing the key topics of the day.

On the Sunday afternoon of conference, LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson and I were pleased to host the LGA's 'welcome' reception.

As well as meeting informally with colleagues, this provided an ideal opportunity for Lee Rowley and Dehenna Davison, two newly appointed members of the ministerial team at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), to introduce themselves to Conservative councillors.

It was great to hear Lee and Dehenna use their speeches to state how they were looking forward to working positively with the LGA and Conservative councillors in their new roles.

Many thanks to Paul Scully, the

Minister of State at DLUHC, for also attending the event and speaking to many of those present.

The following day, I participated in the LGA's fringe meeting, which was titled 'Supporting communities through the rising cost of living and into economic recovery'.

This was, of course, a very topical discussion, and James and I were joined by Nick Park, Director at policy and research consultancy Public First, and John Park, Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy at Google Cloud.

Many thanks to all those who came along and participated in the discussion, and particular thanks to Google for generously sponsoring the session.

On the Tuesday, I was pleased to co-chair the DLUHC ministerial question-and-answer session (which was sponsored by the LGA Conservative Group) with Cllr Philip Broadhead, the Chairman of the Conservative Councillors' Association (CCA).

This closed political session gave us an opportunity to again engage with Lee, Dehenna and Paul, and for Conservative councillors from across the country to raise the issues that matter most to them.

I know those attending the session found it very useful to have this time

with the new members of the ministerial team, and I would like to thank Lee, Dehenna and Paul for attending, and also Philip and the CCA staff for, as always, organising this event so well.

In addition to the events listed above, I was pleased to speak at and participate in a number of other fringe meetings and discussions at the conference as an LGA representative, as did a number of our Conservative LGA board members.

Participation in these events allowed us to engage with key stakeholders on a variety of topics, including levelling up, skills, economic recovery, the cost of living, opportunities for children and young people, transport and climate change.

I would like to thank my colleagues for representing the LGA so well at these events, and also the LGA's public affairs team for both organising our participation and ensuring that we were all well briefed on the matters that we were discussing.

I left conference much more tired than when I arrived but having had a great time catching up with colleagues and participating in so many different and interesting discussions. I hope that all of you reading this who attended conference also had a good time and enjoyed the LGA's events.

A serious alternative

Labour would give local government new powers to drive growth



Lisa Nandy is Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Two years ago, I went to Labour Party conference and said that we had a mountain to climb to win the next General Election.

We had lost our entire Labour base in every nation and region of the UK, and it wasn't clear whether there was a route back for some of the voters that we'd lost, in the places that we love.

The transformation at our recent conference was stark.

In the past couple of years, we've proven that we are fit to govern. In Liverpool, we showed that we are ready to govern, and that we have a plan, a vision and a strategy to get this country working again.

We are now at the top of the mountain looking outwards.

There is, after Prime Minister Liz Truss's and Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng's shameful mini-Budget, a clear and fundamental ideological divide in British politics.

While we agree on the urgent need to grow the economy after 12 years of stagnation, that is where the consensus ends.

Truss and Kwarteng want growth by the few, for the few. We say it takes a nation.

Their plans are not only deeply regressive but won't deliver growth. They have been tried before and failed.

We know that it is only by backing all people and all places that we can rebuild Britain.

That is why I set out plans in Liverpool for a great rebalancing of power to spread wealth, security and opportunity across the whole country.

The next Labour government will empower our brilliant leaders in local government with new powers to drive growth in their own areas.

And we will hand power back to people so communities can take ownership of land and assets – the football clubs, historic buildings and pubs that make a place home.

Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer unveiled Great British Energy – a new, publicly owned clean generation company – that will create jobs, cut energy bills and deliver energy independence for our country.

Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced a National Wealth Fund that will build British industry, investing in homegrown projects, from battery factories to renewable-ready ports.

And we unveiled proposals to boost home ownership, strengthen rights for private renters, and rebuild our social housing stock.

Britain cannot go on trying to power a modern economy using only

a handful of people, in a handful of places, in one small corner of the country. It is like flying a jet on only one engine.

We can only grow the economy by giving all people and all places the opportunity to contribute, and a stake in the future.

When people have a stake in the outcome, they work harder, try longer, think more creatively and do more.

The real wealth creators are the women and men who work in our shops, who drive our buses, who deliver our mail, who care for our families and who teach our children.

They are the foundation of our economy. They are our great untapped asset. Labour will tilt the balance of power back in their favour.

That's what we laid out in Liverpool. There is still a long way to go and we will never be complacent, but it's now clear that Labour isn't just an opposition to this Tory Government. We are a serious alternative.

© LGA/
Gregg Brown
Photography



Lisa Nandy speaking at the LGA's annual conference in June



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

Exchanging ideas

Climate change and the economic outlook will be discussed at the LGA's conference for Independent members

The enthusiasm and excitement of party conferences is coming to our LGA Independent Group, with our annual conference on 28 October at the LGA's London office and online.

It is the opportunity for Independent councillors and groups to have their own 'party conference' and for the members of parties such as the Green Party and Plaid Cymru to come together for a conference that focuses solely on issues of local government.

We need to make headway after the mini-Budget and its U-turn – increased borrowing not for investment, but to "put in people's pockets" – leaving public services around £18 billion short.

The resulting rising borrowing costs disable some of our own growth projects and lead to more people becoming homeless.

Rising inflation, staff costs and fuel prices added to the underlying long-term uncertainty for adult social care make for a toxic mixture that we will seek ways to tackle in a conference session on the economic outlook – a great opportunity for our members to quiz the 'experts', share concerns and develop direction and strategy.

The Independent Group is championing climate change, particularly around retrofit and energy.

This year, supported by the Independent Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, Cllr Frank Biederman, our conference will be

looking at the impact of climate change, and what councils can do to support our communities, public services, businesses, infrastructure and places in adapting to the increased weather extremes that we are facing. Successive storms in February 2020 led to record-breaking floods and the wettest February in the UK since records began in 1910.

The fire services have been at full stretch this year with summer wildfires, as the UK hit a record temperature of 40.3°C in Lincolnshire. The high temperatures led to around 3,000 more deaths than usual.

We saw fire services declare major incidents in Leicestershire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and London, with London saying it was its fire service's busiest day since the Blitz.

Civility in public life is vital to good democracy, and championed by the Independent Group. Our delegates can attend a workshop on the LGA's Debate not Hate campaign and meet a special guest speaker at the evening reception.

We will also be looking at the changes to elections in 2023, and considering what it means for our members standing for election and the electorate.

I am looking forward to a landslide next May, as we have so many councillors working brilliantly in their communities, supporting new candidates, and many seats are up for election.

We see "growth, growth, growth"



in our councillors' performance and numbers, now at 3,028. More councils are led by Independent Group members, and many more are in administration or leading the opposition.

Members will be designing what a 'good' administration looks like, and how to be effective in bringing improvements while in power or opposition.

Most of all, our conference is an opportunity to bring together all our councillors, to meet, network, exchange ideas and learn something new.

The Green Party and Plaid Cymru conferences have been awesome, with lots of determination for a better future.

Being independent doesn't mean being isolated. Together we support each other and make a difference to our local communities, our two countries and our planet.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it on 28 October.



For programme details and to book your free place at the LGA Independent Group Annual Conference 2022, please visit www.local.gov.uk/events

The LGA's graduate programme helps attract new talent to local government



(l to r) Florence, Alice and Richard, some of Rotherham's NGDP graduate trainees

Making a difference



Councillor **Chris Read** (Lab) is Leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

In 2017, Rotherham Council employed its first national management trainee, Becky, via the LGA's National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) for local government. Since that first time dipping our toe in the programme's waters, we haven't looked back.

We have employed a further 16 trainees and are excited to be taking on seven more this year. Our national management trainees (NMTs) are fantastic, and have become a real asset to the council.

The NGDP gained traction quickly from 2017: the majority of senior leaders and managers across the organisation have hosted or worked with an NMT over the past few years, and are fully converted to the benefits the scheme can bring to individual services and the organisation as a whole.

We are always looking for new approaches to recruiting and retaining talented members of staff. Being part of the NGDP allows us to bring in talented people with fresh ideas, while helping us to 'grow our own' generation of inspirational managers and leaders for the future. Nurturing the talent of individuals such as Becky and the

rest of our NMTs is a key goal of our Workforce Plan.

We are proud that our NMT cohort is very diverse in style, thought and personality. Every one of them has made a true impact on the work we do, and is helping to deliver the best possible services and outcomes for our residents and communities.

We really look to maximise the potential of our NMTs by offering them interesting and exciting projects to work on, helping them to see the impact of their work across the borough, and introducing them to key players across the council.

Our retention rate is really positive, with 10 out of 13 management trainees forging careers across the council

Talent spotting

The NGDP is the LGA's flagship national graduate programme for local government and a Times Top 100 graduate employer. Through a highly competitive process, which attracted 4,500 applications last year, the programme matches bright, passionate graduates with councils across the country. Councils have until 31 March 2023 to sign up to participate in this year's programme.



Please visit www.local.gov.uk/ngdp to find out more

Examples of projects on which NMTs have worked include: celebrating 100 years of council housing in Rotherham; reviewing COVID-19 protocols in adult services for residents, visitors and staff; creating and delivering a recycling learning programme for schools; and, most recently, recruiting and managing volunteers for the UEFA Women's Euros.

We have implemented a specific induction programme to introduce NMTs to key council functions and to provide opportunities to meet senior leaders.

During induction, all NMTs attend a day out across the borough, where they can see and hear first hand about the projects going on to develop Rotherham, and about the varied culture and heritage of our town. We have found that this has enhanced the experience of our NMTs from day one.

Our retention rate is really positive, with 10 out of 13 NMTs forging varied careers across the council. This is brilliant for us as an organisation, as we continue to reap the benefits of their skills and experience.

It also shows that NMTs are choosing to stay with the council, which I think says a lot about their experience with us as part of the NGDP.

As leader of the council, I thoroughly recommend the NGDP. You will see some fantastic results, not just for your organisation, but also in a fresh collection of ideas and ways to implement improvements across your borough.



Councillor **David Renard** is Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

A year on from COP26

Council action on climate change can help counter rising energy prices

It doesn't feel like a year since the LGA sent a delegation of senior councillors, led by our Chairman Cllr James Jamieson, our Chief Executive Mark Lloyd and me, to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow.

Much has happened since then, not least the war in Ukraine, rocketing energy prices and a cost-of-living crisis.

However, climate action can help tackle rising energy prices and their effect on the cost of living in the medium to longer term.

COP26 showcased Glasgow and the UK at its best, with an impressive international delegation and a well-executed conference.

It was also a great success for councils and the LGA.

Working with our European local government colleagues, we got the important role of local government and local communities referenced in the

Glasgow Climate Pact, the agreement reached at COP26.

We also showcased local government climate action, and the LGA's Net Zero Programme was highly commended at the Climate Change Challenge Cup.

The UK's updated 'nationally determined contribution' to cutting emissions also includes a paragraph on the essential role local authorities play in driving action to tackle climate change.

Over the past year, the LGA has maintained the pressure on government to move forward in delivering the transition to net zero, positioning it as central to future growth.

Working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, we have established the Local Net Zero Forum with a wide representation from local government. The forum is cross-departmental,

enabling our climate messages and asks to reach across government. The LGA also has a seat on the Net Zero Buildings Council.

The LGA's Climate Change Task Group has pushed for new funding streams, such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, to have realistic lead-in times and delivery deadlines, and, ideally, to not be competitive.

And it is looking forward to hopefully meeting new Climate Minister Graham Stuart in the coming months.

The LGA is spearheading the case for the local path to net zero.

Working with the National Housing Federation, we commissioned a project on hard-to-decarbonise social homes (see www.local.gov.uk/publications and **first** 675). The good news is there is only a small percentage of social homes that are hard to decarbonise, and this number can be further reduced with minor government interventions.

We have funded research into neighbourhood approaches to decarbonising buildings and transport, including council case studies, which will be launched at a webinar on 15 November (see www.local.gov.uk/events).

And we have asked Energy Systems Catapult, an independent not-for-profit, to design an approach whereby central and local government can work together on decarbonising heat and buildings by 2050.

We are also commissioning a piece of work to investigate, understand and present what local government would like to see from the next UK National Adaptation Programme, due in 2023.

COP27, if you weren't aware, is being held in Egypt from 6-18 November.

The LGA won't be sending a delegation, but we will be communicating and showcasing the great work our council membership is doing to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to support government on the journey to net zero.

This includes updating our Pass the Planet campaign with new case studies aligning with both COP26 and COP27 goals, an updated interactive map, social media posts and our neighbourhood decarbonisation webinar (see right).



Pass the planet

The LGA is showcasing councils' good practice in addressing climate change



Councillor **Liz Green** is Lead Member for Climate Change on the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

COP27 is the UN Climate Change Conference that aims to mobilise global action to confront the climate crisis.

With this global summit fast approaching, the LGA is excited to showcase the good practice councils are deploying across the country to address climate change.

We have refreshed our Pass the Planet campaign from last year's COP26 in Glasgow, to promote good practice and universal learning, and support the scaling up of climate actions.

Wales and every English region have been spotlighted and a best practice map showcases the great work happening (see www.local.gov.uk/pass-planet).

The campaign focuses on the four COP goals – mitigation, adaptation, collaboration, and finance – with new and refreshed case studies on each, highlighting the impact and learning from these best practices (see below for some examples).

You can hear more about councils' exciting work on climate action at our virtual webinar, 'Pass the Planet: showcasing local climate action on the COP27 goals', on 8 November.

To book your free place at this and other events (including a regional retrofit action-planning webinar on 6 December), please visit www.local.gov.uk/events.

Meanwhile, our climate change hub provides a wealth of additional information and sets out the support available from the LGA to help councils and residents reach their local carbon reduction targets (see www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub).



Climate action case studies

Mitigation

Durham County Council took part in a 'Scaling on street charging infrastructure' project to improve the availability of electric vehicle charging points across the county and make electric vehicles more accessible to rural communities.

It was important to ensure charging points were near residential housing, accessible to all, reliable, safe and secure.

The council has successfully installed 77 charging points so far, and produced a best practice guide with a series of recommendations for other local authorities looking at conducting similar projects.

Adaptation

Brighton & Hove City Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan recognises and sets out plans to deliver the infrastructure needed to improve and adapt the city's active travel network – ensuring that

it is accessible, easy, welcoming, enjoyable, and safe.

This will include embedding active travel into all transport schemes, including everyday improvements and maintenance, thus creating the foundations for the whole community to have practical choices to travel by walking, wheeling, or cycling in a healthy and sustainable way.

Finance

Warrington Borough Council has piloted the use of community municipal bonds (CMBs), a fundraising tool for local authorities, to fund renewable energy projects. These allow councils to raise money directly from residents.

Bonds were issued by the council to members of the public, who could invest as little as £5 and get regular return payments on this investment.

In Warrington, the £1 million target was

reached and the money raised has been used for low-carbon infrastructure, to speed up carbon emissions reductions.

Collaboration

Wiltshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, and such a bold ambition required an equally bold climate strategy (see **first** 667).

The council wanted to ensure the community was involved in driving new policy, so they developed an engagement strategy to reach a broad demographic, with a focus on those currently not engaged in the climate agenda.

The strategy saw Wiltshire publish a climate strategy discussion document, then engage the community through webinars, consultations, an electronic survey and face-to-face events with residents, schools, and disability groups. This was supported by coverage from all major local media.



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Shared micromobility

What is it – and is it in your decarbonisation plan?



Lucy Cooper is
Assistant Consultant at
transport consultancy
firm Steer

'Shared micromobility' is a relatively new term that covers a wide range of shared, small, lightweight vehicles, including bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters and cargo bikes.

Short-term access to these vehicles for one-way trips is provided within a defined operating area, typically via an app. Users pay on a trip-by-trip basis or by subscription, with vehicles parked anywhere, in designated parking areas, or at docking stations.

According to the shared transport charity CoMoUK, there are currently 39 bike-share schemes in the UK, with 1.8 million members, and 31 live e-scooter rental trials in England, with many being extended until 2024.

Upcoming Local Transport Plan guidance, due to be published by the Department for Transport (DfT), looks set to include consideration of new business models and transport technologies – such as those emerging from shared micromobility – to deliver on decarbonisation goals.

Shared micromobility schemes will, therefore, be an important consideration for local authorities looking to deliver on their own climate change goals.

If managed correctly, shared micromobility schemes can provide a

range of benefits to councils, including:

- A cheaper transport alternative, with users not bearing upfront vehicle costs or paying for maintenance, insurance and parking.
- Access to a more sustainable transport option where public transport accessibility levels are low.
- Improved air quality, with vehicles producing no exhaust emissions.
- A more space-efficient transport mode than the private car, including cargo bikes, which have a compact design ideal for deliveries in congested city centres.
- Encouraging a shift away from the use of private cars. CoMoUK found that 34 per cent of shared e-bike journeys replaced car travel, while shared e-scooter trials in Portsmouth and Southampton indicated that around 40 per cent of trips replaced a car journey.
- An additional, sustainable travel option for users with low fitness levels or health difficulties.
- Supporting the case for cycling infrastructure (which, in turn, could increase the case for less car-dependent new housing and commercial developments).

Currently, micromobility regulation has not caught up with the development of new vehicle types, and councils are well versed in the lack of regulation and enforcement challenges associated with private e-scooters.

While e-bikes that meet the Government's standards are legal to

use on public roads, privately owned e-scooters are not. Where shared e-scooters have been launched as part of the DfT's e-scooter rental trials, these vehicles are legal to use on public roads, subject to users holding a provisional or full driving licence.

This has created a confusing situation for local authorities and users alike.

The UK Government plans to introduce a transport bill to provide greater regulatory clarity in respect of micromobility vehicles, including e-scooters, but also other future, similar vehicle types.

To ensure the benefits of shared micromobility are optimised, local authorities will need to consider safety mitigations, infrastructure, parking provision, operational arrangements, procurement options, and data requirements.

Additionally, shared micromobility schemes may require financial support and need to be promoted in local transport plans, with support from local stakeholders.

A report is being developed for the LGA by Steer, in which these benefits and considerations are explored in detail – see below.



The full report will be published on the LGA's website (www.local.gov.uk), and discussed at an LGA webinar on 14 November – see www.local.gov.uk/events to sign up for **'Shared micromobility: how local authorities can make the most of new mobility options.'**



'Richness of learning'



Councillor **Ankur Shiv Bhandari** (Con) is Mayor and Large Business Champion at Bracknell Forest Council

I was lucky to have attended the BAME Councillors' Weekender event in February 2020, just before COVID-19 struck.

Having been a few months in my councillor role, it was amazing to get the support of such a structured and unique programme.

Coming from an Indian heritage, it was very useful to be able to spend those few days with other BAME councillors and to be able to discuss thoughts, challenges and perceptions in a very safe environment.

The fact that there were colleagues from all minority groups, across different seniority levels, and from across the party-political spectrum added to the richness of learning.

As I have taken charge as the first ethnic minority, and youngest-ever, Mayor at Bracknell Forest Council, the learnings from the BAME Weekender are my constant source of support.

The LGA provides unique learning and networking opportunities for BAME members

Seminars and events to help councillors build valuable networks with their peers, and develop their leadership skills, have long formed a core part of the LGA's support offer to elected members.

Dedicated sessions for LGBTQ+ and younger councillors are held each year, but one of our longest-running and most successful events is for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) councillors.

Set up in 2004, the LGA's BAME Councillors' Weekender event was the UK's first development programme for BAME elected members, and has been supported by Operation Black Vote and the National Association of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors over the years that it has been running.

The programme has been pivotal to the success of many elected members in terms of their development paths as councillors and leaders, and in relation to their political and strategic thinking.

As councils mark Black History Month (October), we are extremely proud that the BAME Councillors' Weekender events continue to grow in success, with an increase in attendance from all over the country and from all parties, giving members that extra confidence to achieve their leadership goals.

The weekenders provide a unique learning and networking opportunity for elected members from BAME backgrounds, and those who are interested in exploring ideas for enhancing the recruitment, promotion and retention of BAME councillors.

To date, more than 400 elected members have attended, with some going on to become committee chairs, mayors, cabinet members, deputy leaders, leaders and MPs.

It is great to be able to read here (see panels) about the experiences of some of our previous participants and the benefits they have gained from attending these events.

The LGA is running two weekender events for BAME councillors over 2022/23. The first is a masterclass in developing your political brand, and takes place from 29-30 October; the second focuses on political skills, with an emphasis on leading as a BAME councillor, and runs from 18-19 February. Both events take place at Warwick Conferences, Coventry.



To find out more about the BAME weekenders and our other Focus on Leadership events for young, LGBTQ+, and opposition members, please visit www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/focus-leadership and email grace.collins@local.gov.uk to book your place



'Inspirational and interactive'



Councillor **Smita Rajesh** (Lib Dem) is Cabinet Deputy for Community Safety at Chelmsford City Council

I found the LGA's BAME Councillors' Weekender event a wonderful opportunity to learn and find support.

As this was my one and only opportunity to meet other councillors from around the country before the pandemic, my appreciation of it has gone straight up in my chart.

The weekend was filled with great tips

and tricks from top leaders across all parties. Some talks were inspirational, while others were interactive.

I felt that the interactive training and talks helped me gain the confidence to speak my mind without hesitation.

I made some good friends, who are still in touch. We have seen each other progress and helped when needed.

The weekend was not only about training and talks. I remember dancing to the music and having a laugh. Delicious food was a bonus. I would definitely recommend this to all new councillors.

'Working twice as hard'



Councillor **Maroof Raouf** (Green) is a member of Sheffield City Council

The LGA's BAME Weekender was a fantastic event, as it allowed me to network and see all the great things that other BAME councillors are doing around the country.

It was great to see so many from different age groups, different ethnicities, and from different parties.

It was a welcome surprise to meet many who had been councillors for many years, and to hear of their experiences and the hardships they have had to endure to get to where they are on the political ladder.

Above all, it was noticeable that many of the BAME councillors I spoke to at the event were of the same opinion – that as non-white people, we always have to work at least twice as hard, if not more, than those who are white; suggesting that as BAME councillors we still have a long way to go to be fully seen as equals by all our respective parties.

'Navigating your new political landscape'



Councillor **Brenda Dacres** (Lab) is Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Development and Planning at the London Borough of Lewisham

Being a new black councillor can feel a little overwhelming, as you feel the weight of responsibility to represent your community, but also to navigate your new political landscape and demonstrate that you have the skills to be an effective councillor.

Attending the BAME Councillors' Weekender event enabled me to meet black, Asian and minority ethnic councillors from across the UK

in similar situations and build a network.

I am fortunate to be part of a party that has worked, and continues to work, on representation.

For some in other parties, who did not have such support when elected, they found that the course provided them with the support network they could call upon when needed.

It gave me a true appreciation that, although we may hold different political views, we can support each other to be the best we can be as councillors.

The weekender enabled me to build on and learn more about leadership skills, being confident to voice my opinion and use my seat at the table to speak up on

behalf of underrepresented communities.

My main take away was that my voice was just as important as anyone else's. It has reaffirmed what I had learnt through my studies to become a barrister – that I should always consider the counter arguments to views I hold to make my case stronger.

As a new councillor, this course gave me the confidence to put myself forward to become Labour Group Chair, Secretary and now Vice Chair (Labour) of the National Association of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority Councillors. It was the foundation that led me to become Deputy Mayor of Lewisham, and I look forward to what the future holds.

Lifestyle choices?

Deprivation continues to underpin many health inequalities



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

It has been suggested that since people choose to smoke, choose what they eat and drink, and whether they take any exercise, that the ill health caused by factors such as smoking and obesity is a matter of personal choice and not an issue of social justice nor a concern of national government.

However, people's lifestyle 'choices' are influenced and to a large extent limited by the social, economic and environmental conditions in which they live.

The following examples illustrate this.

People's level of physical activity is an important determinant of life span and how long they will have a healthy life. In the UK, physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths.

Someone's income will determine to a considerable extent where they can live and therefore the quality of the built environment around them, including their access to green spaces.

Those living in the most deprived areas are 10 times less likely to live in

the greenest areas. Children who live close to green spaces have higher levels of physical activity. Those living closer to green spaces tend to live longer than those with no green space.

So something as apparently simple as the proximity of people's homes to a park can make a difference to the length of their lives.

Around 70,000 deaths and 475,000 hospital admissions a year are currently estimated to be attributed to smoking in England.

People who work in 'routine and manual occupations' are more than twice as likely to be smokers as people in 'managerial and professional occupations'.

Smokers from disadvantaged areas find it more difficult to stop smoking than their more affluent neighbours, despite being just as motivated to try to stop.

Research points to a number of explanations, including lack of social support, higher nicotine dependency (because people in deprived groups start smoking earlier), challenging life circumstances and factors relating to stop smoking services themselves.

Whatever the explanation, the more deprived you are, the more likely you are to die of a smoking-related disease.

Being obese can increase the risk of developing a range of serious diseases, including high blood pressure (hypertension), type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, several cancers, asthma, obstructive sleep apnoea (interrupted breathing during sleep) and musculoskeletal problems.

There is growing evidence on the 'obesogenic environment' that makes it harder for people to attain and remain at a healthy weight. This is hardest of all for people living in the most deprived areas.

There is evidence of elevated levels of obesity in communities with high concentrations of fast-food outlets and further evidence that such concentrations are highest in areas of greatest deprivation.

There is also evidence that the type of food on sale nearest to schools may influence the diet of school children, and that the inequalities gap in child obesity is widening.

Again, whatever the explanation, the more deprived you are, the more likely you are to have and to die of an obesity-related condition.

All of the above are examples of how deprivation and inequalities of income and of place can impact on the health 'choices' available to people.

In many cases, it is a moot question whether what some people call 'lifestyle choices' are really a matter of choice at all.



The LGA provides support and information on public health and prevention,
see <https://bit.ly/3ywk17o>

Accessing elected office

Help is available for disabled people considering becoming a councillor



Councillor **Abi Brown** is Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Being a councillor is all about giving back to your community and bringing your passion to make a difference to your local area and wider society.

We need councillors from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect the communities they serve, to make sure that everyone's voice is heard.

The journey to becoming a councillor can feel daunting, and especially so if you face barriers in society.

Disabled people are consistently underrepresented on councils, with 15.5 per cent of councillors declaring a disability or long-term impairment in 2022, according to the LGA's most recent councillor census. This is despite just more than 20 per cent of the population having a limiting, long-

term illness, condition or impairment.

The LGA has published a new guide to support disabled people to become councillors, as part of its Be a Councillor campaign.

The guide has been shaped with the help of disabled councillors, and aims to increase representation of disabled people in local government.

'Improving access to local government elected office for disabled people' is available now, alongside an 'easy read' version – see www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor/resources.

It forms part of the LGA's wider support for disabled councillors and candidates, which also includes a bespoke leadership development programme and a one-to-one coaching offer for disabled councillors (see **first** 669).

The LGA has also recently launched a Be a Councillor newsletter, which helps explain the steps to becoming a councillor and the support available.

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If you know someone who would make a great councillor, please ask them to sign up for the LGA's Be a Councillor newsletter at bit.ly/3NXChfW

'Life experiences enhance decision-making'



Councillor **Jeanie Bell** (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities at St Helens Borough Council

I stood for election in 2014 for the first time, because I wanted to be part of shaping the policies that impacted my community. More importantly, I just wanted to help people.

I saw so many people and families in my community struggling with debt, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and issues accessing support, such as personal independence payments.

As a young carer growing up, I saw the barriers my mum faced after becoming disabled at work, and I knew I could help support others using my personal experiences.

But it was daunting because I didn't have experience in the field and knew I would have a lot to learn.

Going into my second term, I became disabled myself after the removal of two brain tumours and developing epilepsy because of a lesion on my brain. It changed my life, but also gave me purpose.

People immediately thought I should give up political life as it was too stressful, but I wasn't ready to leave it behind. I had too much work to complete and I love what I do.

My advice to any person with a disability who wants to go into political life is to go for it!

You have a unique perspective and set of life experiences that will enhance decision-making and policy direction.

There is help available and having a disability isn't a barrier to political life; if anything, it's an advantage – you have the lived experience that many do not.

Your voice is needed, important and so valuable.



Frederik Weissenborn is Programme Lead at the Design Council

Designing growth

Design skills can help councils nurture local economic growth



Design is a key driver of economic growth. Research has shown that businesses that invest £1 in design receive £20 in return on investment, and that people with design skills are 47 per cent more productive than the UK average.

But design is not just beneficial to businesses. It also creates value in the public sector, and there is a genuine appetite in local government to adopt strategic design skills.

At the beginning of 2022, the LGA commissioned the Design Council to deliver a design skills programme that supported local authorities in nurturing economic growth.

The programme saw five authority teams from across England receive support to apply design principles to live projects. This included: investigating how to engage younger people with jobs and skills; how to take

a heritage-led approach to town centre regeneration; and how to develop innovation centres in response to the climate emergency.

Officers from East Hampshire District and Havant Borough Councils joined the programme to develop a job centre for 16 to 24-year-olds in a local area of deprivation called Leigh Park.

Taking a design-led approach enabled the authorities to develop valuable insights about their stakeholders and reframe their challenge. This involved exploring opportunities to tie the job centre with other planned works, including the redevelopment of the local reservoir.

"Insight and research enabled a focused project, with clear steps to the end goal," said one officer.

Darlington Borough Council joined the programme to explore ways to unlock the town centre's economic, social and cultural potential through

strategic interventions, such as the introduction of a coordinated shopfront improvement scheme.

This included mapping existing assets – such as heritage sites and cultural venues – and integrating them into a mix that reflects the town's history and supports the community's future aspirations.

Strategic design enabled the team to explore these interventions in a considered and holistic way.

As one officer said: "The design-led process helps to define and consider challenges and outcomes more fully."

Finally, Bolsover District Council and Exeter City Council joined the programme to explore opportunities to nurture innovation locally.

Bolsover wanted to develop a tech centre structured around green technologies, such as heat pumps, working in partnership with the local university.

According to a participating officer, the programme has enabled the council "to work up our business case for a skills academy that has attracted £500,000 of funding".

Exeter City Council was looking to develop a 'green growth' innovation hub in partnership with Exeter University.

Participation in the programme enabled them to focus their thinking, and act with speed and purpose.

"Taking a design-led approach means you can do something at pace – be agile – without spending lots of money that you might regret later," said one officer.

In conclusion, councils working on economic growth can look to incorporate design thinking to increase skills levels, build civic pride, and retain local talent. This, in turn, is beneficial to local communities.

But to ensure councils can support planetary goals, those efforts must be matched by investments in sustainable, regenerative practices.

Taking a triple bottom-line approach to levelling up – factoring in economic, social and environmental outcomes – can be a helpful way of framing the issue. Conceptualising levelling up in this way can help not only drive growth and wellbeing, but also support a sustainable future for all.

ARE OUR CAR PARKS FIT FOR THE VEHICLES OF THE FUTURE?

Sika, a global construction materials manufacturer with over 40 years' experience in the rehabilitation of Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCPs) has launched a new specialist report aimed at owners and operators. **Build, repair and refurbish: Are our car parks fit for the vehicles of the future?** takes stock of the UK's MSCP structures and examines whether they are fit for purpose for the ongoing Electric Vehicle (EV) transition.

The rise of EVs and implications for MSCPs

EVs have been identified as an important weapon in the fight against climate change and are a key component of the UK's net zero strategy. However, EVs are significantly heavier than internal combustion (IC) engine vehicles and there is mounting concern about the impact this influx of heavier vehicles will have on the UK's car park estate.

Many existing local authority MSCPs were built in the 1960s and 1970s, predominantly from reinforced concrete. Many have structural defects 'baked in' due to issues with design, materials and workmanship; all of which can be exacerbated by neglect and the increased demands placed on them by owners and operators. The EV revolution looks set to put extra strains on these already overburdened structures.

What does this mean for local authorities?

A poorly maintained and repaired structure can put the public at risk of harm which is why it's essential for local authorities to carry out regular inspections and maintenance, rather than relying on reactive works; an approach which can lead to snowballing of issues and much more costly interventions. Tell-tale signs of degradation include water seepage/staining, damaged coatings, concrete cracking, spalling and exposed steel reinforcement.

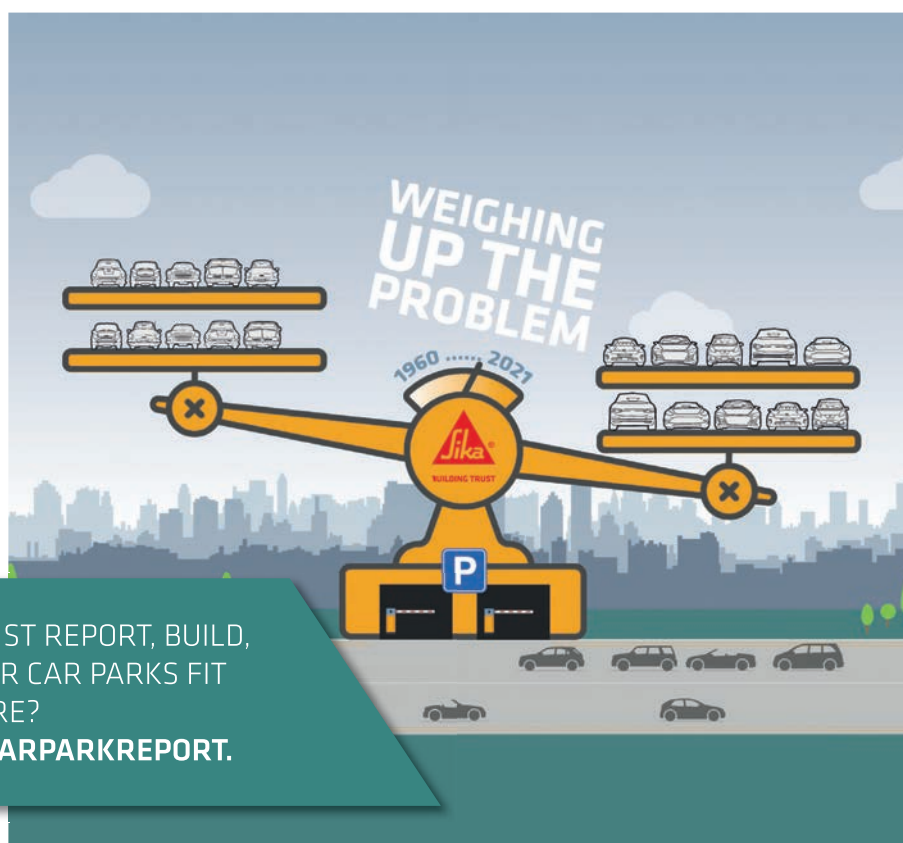
Fortunately, with clever specification using Sika's market leading product systems, car parks can be rehabilitated and protected long into the future. What is more, as much as 80% of the car park can remain open during the works reducing the impact of closures and access restrictions.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Regardless of how well-designed or constructed car parks are, deterioration is inevitable without proper upkeep and maintenance. If these activities are ignored, partial or full closures are often required to carry out repairs. This can have a significant and sustained effect on the ability of the car park to generate revenue for the local authorities.

A partially or fully closed car park also results in loss of footfall for surrounding businesses and can have a dramatic impact on the high street. The damage can be long lasting as valuable customers can be lost to competitor private car parks.

Above all else, local authorities have a legal duty to maintain the parking facility and ensure it does not endanger the people using it.



DOWNLOAD SIKA'S NEW SPECIALIST REPORT, BUILD, REPAIR AND REFURBISH: ARE OUR CAR PARKS FIT FOR THE VEHICLES OF THE FUTURE?
VISIT [HTTPS://GBR.SIKA.COM/CARPARKREPORT](https://GBR.SIKA.COM/CARPARKREPORT).

Cost-of-living crisis in the countryside



Councillor **Cecilia Motley** is Chair of the Rural Services Network

During our National Rural Conference 2022, in late September, the Rural Services Network published research into the cost-of-living crisis.

This showed that rural communities are being pushed into a cost-of-living emergency by a triple blow of higher domestic and transport energy poverty, and lower wages.

The theme of the conference, 'Reducing rural inequality and improving opportunities', emphasised the need for the Government to take action before the gap between rural and urban areas becomes insurmountable.

The research found that rural residents working in rural economies earn much less than urban residents, yet face significantly higher costs across key aspects of living.

These include heating, transport, house prices, rent, food prices, childcare costs and council tax.

In addition, the fuel-poverty gap is significantly larger in rural areas. The latest data from 2020 shows that the reduction in fuel bills needed to take rural households out of full poverty is £501, compared with an average in England of £223.

If you add in the significant increases of the past year, this puts rural residents at an even greater disadvantage.

Delegate numbers at our conference were 50 per cent higher compared with last year, showing the increased importance of discussion that solely focuses on rural policy and solutions.

The conference included a keynote session from the then Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' Minister Lord Benyon who stressed the importance of the need to "not just level up, but also level out, out of the town to



the village and beyond". He also highlighted the need to improve digital connectivity in rural areas, an important driver of productivity.

A number of challenges were raised by speakers and delegates at the conference. These included the impact of second homes and holiday rentals on the housing market in key rural hotspots. This has led to a significant reduction in the rental housing market, causing serious difficulties for those on local wages trying to access affordable housing.

The lack of public transport options, and the fact that few rural areas were awarded bus service improvement plan funding, will continue to have a major impact on rural communities' ability to access health services, education, skills training and employment.

The lack of digital connectivity can also have a negative impact on residents' ability to access health and care services,

as well as other vital public services and training and employment opportunities.

Productivity and wages are lower in rural areas, which demonstrates the need for a specific rural approach from the Government to help deal with this pernicious inequality.

Rural areas also suffer from a greater fuel-poverty gap than urban areas.

The current government policy of making off-grid homes move to heat pump heating systems much earlier than those on the Grid will force rural residents to shoulder a significant financial burden to ensure their homes are energy efficient, often costing tens of thousands of pounds.

The Prime Minister and her Government must take bold and speedy action to develop rural-specific policies and a fair funding approach to rural public services.

They must devise rural-friendly policies to rapidly reduce inequality and enable our rural communities to take advantage of opportunities and realise their full potential – to the benefit of rural economies and the country as a whole.



The Rural Services Network's 'Rural cost of living' research can be downloaded in full at bit.ly/3CA7PGk

Connecting communities



Councillor **Neil Prior** (Ind) is Cabinet Member for Corporate Improvement and Communities at Pembrokeshire County Council

The Llanrhian Connected Community is an initiative that uses grant funding to employ two part-time community link officers, who are helping to create a stronger and more resilient local community.

Activities include running local events, amplifying existing local community group efforts, and a sharp focus on communications across the area.

Working alongside me and other local volunteers, it's showing what can be done when we as 'the institution' let go and try safe-to-fail innovation techniques in local communities.

With demand rising for local government services, yet resources stretched, I wanted to see what could be achieved in my own ward to help the shift from 'managing need' to 'creating capability'.

While it's still early days, and this is very much a long-term project – although,



frustratingly, funded on an annual basis – we now have a benchmark for resident satisfaction, and a demonstrable increase in volunteer hours and the number of active citizens.

In addition to the everyday acts of kindness we promote, we have developed a vision for the future that includes housing and environmental stewardship.

If councils want communities to do more for themselves, they need to allocate time, resource and expertise.

Councils can't keep on 'managing crisis'; they have to create the headspace

to act and plan for the future – and communities can and want to be a part of that.

The leadership 'ask' of councillors is adaptive, and we need to use our relationship-building, partnership working, and influencing skills to the best of our ability.

Working with communities can be complex, difficult and unpredictable, but hugely rewarding. As a cabinet member with a new communities portfolio, I'm looking forward to applying these principles on a wider scale, to connect the good intentions and resources of the council and its partners with the local know-how and community activism that exists – for the benefit of us all.



See www.connectedcommunity.wales to find out more about the **Llanrhian Connected Community**

Audit fees to increase



Steve Freer is Chair of Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd

Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) has completed its procurement of audit services on behalf of 470 opted-in local government, police and fire bodies (99 per cent of eligible bodies).

Five-year contracts, commencing with the audit of 2023/24 accounts, have been let to six suppliers – Azets, Bishop Fleming, Ernst & Young, Grant Thornton, KPMG and Mazars.

The procurement has taken place against the challenging backcloth of a troubled audit profession, a turbulent market, and a local audit system that is facing unprecedented difficulties, including large volumes of delayed audit opinions.

Recruitment, retention and regulatory

risks are persistent concerns for suppliers.

The procurement has been protracted because of the limited supply capacity available in the market.

Only 10 audit firms are currently registered to undertake local audits in England, three of which opted not to take part in this procurement.

While we are relieved to have secured sufficient capacity to meet the sector's needs through to audits of 2027/28

accounts, the outcome of the procurement will result in a significant increase in audit fees.

The bid prices submitted by successful firms will lead to an unavoidable major reset of fees in 12 months' time.

At this stage, our advice to councils and others is to anticipate an increase of around 150 per cent on the total fees for 2022/23.

We appreciate that an increase of this scale will pose a significant funding challenge for local bodies already facing a daunting range of financial pressures.

We have raised this concern with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for consideration, and the LGA has indicated that it will be seeking support from government to help fund these additional costs.

In our view, it is critical that efforts to strengthen the local audit system are redoubled to ensure that the equivalent procurement in five years' time takes place against a much more stable backcloth and in a much more competitive market.



See www.psaa.co.uk to find out more about **the work of Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd**

Changing of the guard



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

With the previous edition of **first** quite rightly focusing on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I would like to take this opportunity to belatedly congratulate Liz Truss on her appointment as Prime Minister.

As a former councillor, Liz has direct experience of our sector, and I look forward to the LGA working with her on the key issues facing councils.

Again belatedly, I would like to congratulate Simon Clarke on his appointment as our new Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Simon is, of course, well known to

many of us from his time as a minister at the then Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Along with LGA Conservative Group colleagues, I have already had a number of useful meetings with him.

I was also pleased to congratulate Dehenna Davison, Lee Rowley, Andrew Stephenson and Baroness Scott on their appointments as Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State at DLUHC, and Paul Scully on his re-appointment as Minister of State.

Many of you will know Jane Scott from her time as Leader of Wiltshire Council, and it is great to see 'one of our own' achieve a ministerial position.

I would also like to take this opportunity to, again belatedly, thank Greg Clark for his support and engagement during his brief tenure at DLUHC. Greg has always been, and I know he will continue to be, a strong advocate for councillors, councils and the sector,

and I wish him all the best for the future.

I would also like to thank Eddie Hughes and Marcus Jones for their support and assistance during their time at DLUHC, and I wish Lia Nici all the best following her appointment as an Assistant Government Whip.

Along with my LGA Conservative Group colleagues, I look forward to working with our new Prime Minister, our new DLUHC ministerial team, and ministers from other departments to secure the best possible outcomes for the people and communities we represent.

"I look forward to working with our new ministers to secure the best possible outcomes for the people and communities we represent"



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

The cost of underfunded local services

Amid ongoing financial, economic and political uncertainty, the LGA continues to call strongly for a long-term government plan to put councils' finances on a sustainable footing.

The LGA has calculated that rising inflation, National Living Wage and energy costs have left councils facing £2.4 billion in extra cost pressures this year, with estimated funding gaps of £3.4 billion in 2023/24 and £4.5 billion the year after (see p10).

As **first** was going to press, the political and financial situation was extremely unsettled, with former Health and Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt replacing Kwasi Kwarteng as Chancellor and further announcements expected.

However, the LGA has warned against further cuts to local government funding, after councils lost £15 billion of central



government funding between 2010 and 2020.

Without extra funding to meet demand and cost pressures, and given the funding gaps they are seeing, councils would have no choice but to implement significant cuts to services, including to those for the most vulnerable in our societies.

Underfunding local services also has a knock-on effect on the wider economy and other public services – something illustrated not least in adult social care.

Around one in five residential care workers is living in poverty according to the charity the Health Foundation, with low pay contributing to long-term

recruitment and retention problems in the sector.

The consequence is more pressure on those still working in care, poorer services for some of our most vulnerable residents, and hospitals unable to discharge patients because of care staff shortages.

It's why the LGA has called on the Prime Minister to deliver on her pledge to provide £13 billion to tackle the crisis in adult social care, of which £3 billion is needed to improve care worker pay and help recruit and retain staff.

With adequate funding, councils can protect and invest in local services, deliver for our communities, support economic growth and level up everywhere.



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

Public services at breaking point

Just weeks after taking power, Prime Minister Liz Truss and former Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng made a remarkable impact – their disastrous kamikaze mini-Budget crashed the economy, causing market panic, and forcing the Bank of England to intervene.

They have made our country an international laughing stock. It is hard to think of a more catastrophic act of self-harm.

And who pays for their mistakes? We do.

In the middle of an appalling cost-of-living crisis, people are now facing eye-watering mortgage rate and rent hikes that far outweigh any benefits from unfunded tax cuts, the vast majority of which benefit the richest.

Rather than admit their mistake and reverse their ruinous mini-Budget, the Conservatives will instead force tens of billions more in cuts to public services that are at breaking point.

And we can already see them sharpening their knives.

“With demand and costs increasing, how are councils expected to find even more cuts?”

Local Government Minister Paul Scully says there is ‘undoubtedly’ fat to be trimmed, a statement as insulting as it is untrue.

Extra cost pressures from higher energy costs and inflation have created a funding gap of £2.4 billion this year; with both the demand for, and the cost of, providing services increasing, how on earth are councils expected to find even more cuts?

The Tories have made everybody worse off. They have proven themselves incapable of governing. They have no mandate for their failed experiment.

Labour would provide responsible finances based on sound money, strong fiscal rules and long-term growth to the economy.

It's time for a General Election.



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

Budgets destroyed by inflation

Frontline services, already cut to the bone, and regeneration projects are under the greatest threat, with inflationary pressures predicted to cost councils more than £1 billion next year at least.

Councils are already cutting back on regeneration projects and looking to cut services, beyond what was already planned. Things have deteriorated massively over the past few months as energy costs have hit us.

“The talk of further cuts to local government is not worrying, but terrifying”

Councils and our residents, are fearful of the impact of inflation on their 2023/24 budget planning, with two-thirds warning they face a ‘threat’ or ‘extreme pressure’ to key service delivery, a recent survey has shown.

American President Ronald Reagan once said: “Inflation is as violent as a mugger, as frightening as an armed robber and as deadly as a hit man.” And he was not wrong.

Our members are telling us that the threat to the key services that residents rely on is very real, while many regeneration projects, central to ‘levelling up’ and whatever is the Government’s growth agenda, are already being curtailed if not cancelled outright.

In recent days, government ministers have suggested that all areas, including local government, will need to make yet more cuts.

The announcement that there will not be a new spending review that recognises the impact of inflation on the cost of services is downright stupid. The talk of further cuts to local government is not worrying, but terrifying.

There are no meaningful ‘efficiencies’ left, despite what government ministers say, and our preventative services are on their knees already.



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

Councils creaking under the strain

Before the mini-Budget, the LGA had calculated a £2.4 billion shortfall in our council budgets from next May.

Borrowing to give tax cuts clearly makes a bad situation worse, as inflation, rising interest rates, and higher wages add to our deficit and to the demands on our services.

In response, the Green Party’s leaders and speakers gave inspiring and powerful speeches at their vibrant conference, that I supported on behalf of the LGA’s Independent Group.

I hosted an event and joined councillor discussions, led by our LGA peer, exploring ways to be ever more effective.

Councillors raised concerns about the Government’s investment zones, loss of planning control, caps on council rents (which are already non-profit-making) and a ‘war on nature’ to deliver unreasonable developments.

As **first** was going to press, I was looking forward to supporting Plaid Cymru councillors at their conference in Llandudno.

Being half Welsh myself, with a grandfather who was a ‘fire and brimstone’ minister, I am looking forward to some excellent speeches and exciting discussions.

“Borrowing to give tax cuts clearly makes a bad situation worse”

They say the “extremist mini-Budget has caused a £4 billion-sized black hole in Wales’ three-year funding settlement”.

Meanwhile public services are already creaking under the strain. And they have some solutions.

The Independent Group conference for all our members is on 28 October at the LGA’s London office. It is always well attended, focusing on what councils can do. Please do join us. See www.local.gov.uk/events to book your free place or email independent.groupLGA@local.gov.uk

Huge thanks to all our councillors who continue to do so much in our communities.

COUNCILLOR

Help for corporate parents



'Corporate parent' is the name given to the collective statutory responsibility of the whole council, and the personal responsibility of every councillor and council officer, for ensuring secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children in care and care leavers.

These responsibilities are defined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and extend to district councils, with other partners including health, police and education also having a duty to support the council to fulfil its corporate parenting role.

Being a corporate parent means being ambitious for children in care and care leavers and keeping an eye on the big things in their life – such as

education, looking after their health and wellbeing, and preparing them for life as independent adults.

It's also about the smaller things that show children they are valued and cared for.

All councillors should be championing the needs of children in care and care leavers, and relentlessly asking 'Would this be good enough for my child?' and 'If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?'

The LGA's e-learning platform now provides councillors with a module offering an opportunity to learn more about corporate parenting, and how you as a councillor can use your role to support and encourage care-experienced children and young people to achieve their aspirations.

The module is illustrated with practical tips and good practice examples, as well as questions you can ask to both find out more, and to champion the needs of children in care and care leavers.

The content will be of interest to all councillors and could be particularly useful as part of an induction package for new councillors, or for those taking up a children's scrutiny or corporate parenting board role for the first time.

Councillors can access modules on a wide range of topics and skills on our e-learning platform, tailoring learning to your individual needs and interests. To register please visit www.local.gov.uk/councillor-e-learning.



Local leadership

The LGA is currently refreshing its local leadership framework and wants to hear from councillors about what helps them to be more effective.

We are running a series of engagement events, at which you can contribute to the development of the new framework, network with councillors from other councils, and share tips and advice on how

to be an effective elected member.

The events are free, will be held virtually, via Zoom, and are open to all councillors in England and Wales.

You only need attend one of the three events, taking place on 16, 21 and 28 November. Please go to bit.ly/3ejQDve to book your place, and for further information email leadership@local.gov.uk.

Help shape our sector support offer

The LGA provides a wide range of training and development opportunities for councillors, officers and local authorities as part of its government-funded sector support offer.

This offer continues to help councils improve and deliver their local priorities, with 91 per cent of council leaders stating that our support made a positive difference to their local authorities in 2021/22.

In the same year, we engaged more than 2,000 councillors in our development opportunities, with 90 per cent of senior councillors saying that our improvement support, including peer support, training and mentoring, had been useful to them.

The programme is shaped by what councils tell us they need. We want to know what aspects of the current offer have proven most valuable and what

support you will need next year to continue to improve and address the challenges you face.

Please have your say by completing our short survey at www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-survey by 11 November. Your feedback will help to inform the future offer.

You can see our current offer at www.local.gov.uk/publications/sector-support-offer-2022-23

ELECTIONS

Local factors and surprise gains



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



which has a majority Muslim population.

However, one of the ward's sitting councillors, Shamim Abdullah, elected for Labour, recently defected to the Conservatives following a

dispute with her former party over local schooling developments.

For the by-election, the Conservatives again selected Ayyub Patel who won just over a third of the vote in May but this time polled 55 per cent to become the first Conservative elected in the ward.

A second Conservative gain, this time in Coventry's Sherbourne ward, saw six candidates compete in a marginal ward.

Labour's majority was trimmed to just 35 votes last May with the swing running against the national tide, as it did in some other Coventry wards. Voters may have been reacting adversely to a long-running bin strike in the Labour-controlled city.

Established in 2004, Sherbourne elected Conservatives during Labour governments, but from 2010 voters returned only Labour councillors until 2021 when a Conservative won again.

Despite the difficulties facing her party's national leadership, this time Conservative Jackie Gardiner won impressively, securing a 504-vote majority.

Two gains and four seats held (two of which were in Rossendale) provided a welcome respite for the Conservatives, but defeats were inevitable.

There was the now customary loss to the Greens, this time in Wealden, where there was a straight fight for the Maresfield ward once Labour opted out of the contest. The gain takes the Green tally against the Conservatives to 20 seats since the last General Election.

Labour compensated for its two losses by making gains from the Conservatives, in Newark & Sherwood, and Shropshire.

There was a 10 per cent swing in Labour's favour in the former, which was easily enough to overturn a majority of just six votes in Edwinstone & Clipstone ward from 2019.

Another split ward – Shropshire's Bridgnorth West and Tasley – saw Labour take the ward's second seat with a more modest 5 per cent swing since 2021.

Labour may be enjoying a record lead in recent national polls but attracting local vote switchers in the same volume is not proving so easy.

A third Labour win was achieved at the expense of the Mansfield Independents in Oak Tree ward. With local parties suspending campaigning following the Queen's death, there was a low turnout. But Labour's Paul Henshaw did enough to take the victory.

In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, the local Independent fared rather better, easily retaining the Highcliffe and Walkford ward with a significantly increased majority, despite competition from the three main parties.

Labour incurred a third defeat in Ceredigion's Lampeter ward where long-standing councillor Robert "Hag" Harris had enjoyed a large personal following and was returned unopposed last May.

His death saw four candidates contest the vacancy with Ann Morgan for Plaid Cymru (which holds both the Westminster and Senedd constituencies where the ward is located) winning by just 23 votes over the Liberal Democrats.

Local factors and changing patterns of party competition continue to feature in recent by-elections, including two surprising Conservative gains from Labour.

The first of these was in Bolton's Rumworth ward where Labour won easily only last May. Easy Labour wins are a regular occurrence in the ward,

Local by-elections

Bolton, Rumworth

CON GAIN FROM LAB
17.3% over Lab Turnout 28.6%

Ceredigion, Lampeter

PLAID CYMRU GAIN FROM LAB
3.1% over Lib Dem Turnout 33.0%

Coventry, Sherbourne

CON GAIN FROM LAB
18.7% over Lab Turnout 22.7%

Mansfield, Oak Tree

LAB GAIN FROM MAN IND
16.7% over Man Ind Turnout 15.9%

Newark & Sherwood, Edwinstowe & Clipstone

LAB GAIN FROM CON
19.6% over Con Turnout 15.7%

Shropshire, Bridgnorth West and Tasley

LAB GAIN FROM CON
25.6% over Con Turnout 28.9%

Wealden, Maresfield

GREEN GAIN FROM CON
22.5% over Con Turnout 35.7%

i Only by-elections where there was a change of political control are shown here. For more details on other recent and previous results, please visit www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections

Two gains and four seats held provided a welcome respite for the Conservatives

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