



Local climate action

Delivering net zero

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Autumn finances

As **first** was going to press, the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2023 (COP28) was getting started in Dubai.

Councils recognise the urgency and scale of the challenge, with more than 300 – plus the LGA – declaring climate emergencies.

We continue to call for devolved approaches to tackling climate change because local action is more effective and will deliver greater benefits, as demonstrated by the Government's own research (p16-17).

Elsewhere in this edition of **first**, you can read a summary of the LGA's response to the Autumn Statement (p10-11), and we have a round-up of key new bills for local government announced in November's King's Speech (p9).

We look at LGA-commissioned research on how best to help people who are economically inactive back into work (p14-15), and on bringing empty houses back into use (p18).

This year marked the tenth anniversary of One Public Estate, our central-local government partnership that helps make best use of surplus public buildings and land for regeneration and building new homes (p22-23).

And our lead comment this month is from Professor Sir Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer, on the Government's plans to tackle smoking and vaping (p25).

Councillor Shaun Davies
is LGA Chair



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Public ‘not prepared for climate change’

Just 5 per cent of the British public feel prepared for climate change, according to an LGA poll.

The survey, conducted by YouGov, asked more than 2,100 adults about their concerns around global warming following extreme weather events in recent years.

It found that 63 per cent of respondents are worried about climate change while only 12 per cent think it will not impact their local area.

The public were most worried about storms, flooding and heatwaves, while they were least worried about wildfires or the impact on the economy and public services, the survey found.

The LGA is calling for a rapid acceleration in the adaptation work needed to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

This includes measures to protect the most vulnerable, build flood defences, secure local infrastructure, cool homes and buildings, and to be ready for water and food insecurity.

Councils are also calling for government guidance on critical thresholds for different weather patterns, including the threshold temperatures that different services can change or close, from play areas to libraries.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: “Councils want to play their full role in preparing people and places for the impacts of climate change on local areas.

“As extreme weather events become more frequent and intense, the public sense of unpreparedness will undoubtedly harden and grow.

“Councils are doing fantastic work to tackle climate change and we want our communities to feel secure in their homes and local areas.

“The public trust us most because we are rooted in communities and understand places: we must be given the tools and funding needed to make that happen.”

• See p16

£8.3bn boost for road repairs

The Government has announced £8.3 billion of extra funding, re-directed from HS2, to help improve local roads in England.

Local highway authorities across the country will receive £150 million this financial year, followed by a further £150 million in 2024/2025, with the rest allocated through to 2034.

The total amount is equivalent to resurfacing 5,000 miles of roads. Councils will be required to publish regular information on their websites explaining how they are spending the funding in their area.

The announcement is part of the Government's Network North plan, which will see £36 billion invested in hundreds of transport projects and initiatives across the country, including the extension of the £2 bus fare cap in England to the end of next year and more than £1 billion to improve bus journeys in the North and the Midlands.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Transport Spokesperson, said: “Councils want to invest in cost-effective and resilient resurfacing, rather than retrospectively dealing with potholes. This funding is a significant boost towards improving more of the 186,000 miles of England's local roads.

“The LGA has consistently called for longer-term funding to tackle our estimated £14 billion local roads repair backlog.

“This announcement will provide some much-needed clarity for councils on what they can expect to receive in the short term, so they can plan ahead and reinstate repairs that had been impacted by inflation.

“Longer-term, the Government should award council highways departments with five-yearly funding allocations, so they can develop resurfacing programmes and other highways improvements, tackling the scourge of potholes.”



Views sought on future of local government

Council leaders and chief executives are being invited to share their views about what is needed in local areas, to help inform the LGA's work on a Local Government White Paper.

The LGA is developing a plan for the first King's Speech after the coming General Election, aimed at securing a national-local partnership – a new local deal – in which local government can work to its full potential for local people, places and

the planet. The white paper – from local government, and for local government and communities – will present a clear vision for the future of the sector, based on the priorities of the public, councils and local communities.

It will be underpinned by the LGA's Make It Local campaign (see www.local.gov.uk/make-it-local) and published before the next election.

As part of the ongoing work to

develop effective proposals that help local communities, the LGA wants to hear from council leaders and chief executives about what is needed in local areas, their priorities and the key changes the sector needs for the future.

They can share their feedback by completing a short online survey at: www.local.gov.uk/local-government-white-paper.

This closes on Friday 15 December.



Children's social care 'pushed to the brink'

Councils' ability to provide the critical care and support that children rely on has been put at risk by the Autumn Statement's lack of investment in children's social care, the LGA has warned.

Funding for early years and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) were also missing from Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's announcement in November.

Ahead of the Autumn Statement, the LGA was joined by charities and campaigners in calling for an increase in the children's social care budget, in an open letter to the Chancellor.

The 29 signatories included Barnardo's, Action for Children, Centre for Mental Health and the Care Leavers' Association.

They warned of "a perfect storm" of financial pressures and rising numbers of children needing help.

Figures released last month show there are now 83,840 children in local authority

care in England, and the proportion of council budgets going towards meeting children's social care continues to grow – despite real-term reductions in councils' spending power.

The coalition warned that much of this funding is being spent on supporting children at the highest risk, meaning less money can be invested in early intervention services that can step in before a child and their family reach crisis point.

LGA Chair Cllr Shaun Davies said: "For some time now, councils, charities, those with lived experience and other voices from the sector, have been warning of the serious challenges facing children's social care.

"Councils are doing everything they can to provide the vital care and support our vulnerable children need and deserve.

"Additional funding is urgently needed to stabilise the children's social care system before it is pushed to the brink."

• See p10-11

Adult social care pressures 'unresolved'

The LGA has pledged to "keep lobbying" for additional funding for adult social care, after the sector was largely ignored in the Autumn Statement.

Alongside the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), it had warned that councils face tough decisions around maintaining care and support services as financial pressures demand further savings from adult social care.

The ADASS autumn survey found that nearly a quarter of a million people in England were waiting to have their care needs assessed by the end of the summer, and that almost a third of directors had been asked to make savings collectively totalling £83.7 million for the year.

The organisations said those savings come in addition to the £806 million in savings that directors across England had already committed to make in their budgets this year.

The survey's findings come amid a challenging environment of high inflation, increasing demand for services and complexity of need, workforce challenges, and a "welcome, but costly" rise in the National Living Wage.

An LGA spokesperson said: "While the investment made in the Autumn Statement 2022 was very welcome, we urged the Government not to think that care and support is now 'fixed'.

"The absence of new funding, and the near total absence of any commentary on adult social care, might suggest the Government considers that pressures are resolved, and the sector has what it needs. This is patently not the case.

"People who draw on care and support will be understandably worried about the continuing impact of significant pressures on the service."

Autumn Statement to 'stimulate growth'

The Government announced a suite of measures primarily aimed at increasing economic productivity and boosting investment by businesses in November's Autumn Statement.

The plans include a 2 per cent cut to National Insurance rates effective from January 2024, and increases in working-age benefits, the state pension and the National Living Wage.

Calls to ease budget pressures in children's services and adult social

care were ignored (see above and right).

But the Chancellor did take action on two long-standing LGA calls, by restoring Local Housing Allowance rates to 30th percentile of market rents, and by announcing a £450 million third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, which will help councils support families to move into their own homes and reduce homelessness risks.

Cllr Shaun Davies, LGA Chair, said: "Supporting businesses and easing the cost of living for households is important, but

not if our public services continue to be chronically underfunded and unable to be there to support people when they need them.

"Councils have worked hard to find efficiencies and reduce costs, but the easy savings have long since gone. It is wrong that our residents now face further cuts to services as well as the prospect of council tax rises next year, with councils having the difficult choice about raising bills to bring in desperately needed funding."

£1bn announced for levelling up

New levelling up funding of £1 billion has been awarded to 55 projects across the UK, to develop better transport links and kick-start regeneration in town centres.

The Government said this third and final round of its flagship Levelling Up Fund will spread opportunity, create jobs and revitalise local communities.

Successful schemes were chosen from the pool of bids that narrowly missed out on funding in round two but were assessed as high quality and able to deliver quickly.

Cllr Martin Tett, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "This funding will provide a much-needed boost to regeneration projects in communities across the country.

"It is positive to see that places that had been overlooked in previous rounds have been included on the strength of their previous bids and that culture is given the extra recognition it deserves in strengthening pride-in-place.

"Streamlining the long list of local funding pots, reducing the need for costly funding competitions and allocating funds based on robust evidence have been long-held asks of local government. It is good that these calls have been heard."

Meanwhile, a report from the National Audit Office into levelling up funding has found that projects are behind where government expected them to be, and it is unlikely that councils will be able to complete projects by the original deadlines.

The LGA said inflation, rising construction costs, and supply and skills shortages have all contributed to delays and called for more joined-up funding to be made available to every part of the country.



Vouchers for infant milk 'need 20% uplift'

The value of the Healthy Start scheme needs to increase by 20 per cent to compensate for increases in the cost of food, new LGA analysis has found.

The scheme, which operates in England and Wales, helps pregnant women or families with children under the age of four with the cost of food and milk. It was last reviewed in 2020.

The LGA found that support for families with a baby under the age of one should rise from £8.50 a week to £10.47, and warned the current scheme does not meet the average price of any available first infant formula milk.

Support for families with a baby between the ages of one and four should rise from £4.25 to £5.24 a week.

Councils have been working hard to promote the scheme locally, with uptake in England up 7 per cent since the start of 2023, to 70 per cent.

However, 141,970 eligible pregnant women, babies and infants missed out on the scheme in October alone, equivalent to the entire population of Blackpool.

Families who have less confidence managing money, or those who cannot speak English well or at all, are less likely to be taking advantage of Healthy Start.

The LGA wants the scheme to expand to include all children facing food insecurity and



poverty, and for its value to be reviewed every six months.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Healthy Start is a vitally important programme that has helped families get access to healthy and affordable food since it was established nearly 20 years ago.

"However, it has not kept pace with rising food inflation and does not fully meet the value of essential items such as baby formula."

Government rejects four-day week

Councils in England have been told not to adopt four-day working weeks and the only council currently trialling such a scheme has been put under review.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has been running a flexible working scheme since January, with the aim of tackling staff recruitment and retention issues, reducing reliance on agency staff, and reducing costs.

The trial began with 470 office-based staff working a 30-hour week on full-time pay, and has since been extended to include waste crews, and to March 2024.

However, in September, the then Local Government Minister, Lee Rowley, wrote to the council requesting it stop the trial.

In late October, the Government published non-statutory guidance advising councils in England not to adopt four-day working week arrangements

because of concerns about value for money for local taxpayers.

And in November, South Cambridgeshire was issued with a 'Best Value Notice', notifying it of government concerns about the pilot and requiring evidence and data on its impact.

Cllr John Williams, South Cambridgeshire's Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, said: "Our staff turnover is down, our sickness is down, and our recruitment has seen clear benefits with almost 100 new staff joining the council this year. These findings are exactly why we wanted to test a four-day week over a longer period."

Both the LGA and the District Councils' Network have said councils should be free to innovate locally, as they know their areas best and are democratically accountable to their local electorate.

Empty homes rise 10 per cent



The number of long-term empty homes in England has increased by nearly 10 per cent over the past five years – the equivalent of just over 1 per cent of the country's housing stock, according to a new report from the LGA and the Empty Homes Network.

The findings show that the numbers across all types of empty homes have risen steadily since the pandemic and have largely exceeded the figures seen in 2018.

Last year, more than one million properties across England were unoccupied (4.01 per cent of all dwellings), an increase of nearly 60,000 homes since 2018.

There are currently more than one million people on council housing waiting lists and more than 104,000 households living in temporary accommodation.

Bringing just 10 per cent of these empty homes back into use could help to find permanent homes for households in temporary accommodation.

The report, and the best practice proposals and recommendations within it, aim to support councils in their efforts to reduce the numbers of empty homes, increase housing supply, encourage inward investment, and provide a better quality of life for residents and neighbours affected by the issues empty homes cause.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "At a time when we face a chronic housing shortage across the country, it is wrong for so many homes to be left empty.

"Councils share a collective national ambition to tackle local housing challenges. They work hard to address the issue, but the existing measures are clearly falling short.

"The Government should also support this ambition by implementing our six-point action plan so that councils can resume their historic role as a major builder of affordable homes."

• See p18

'Record' numbers in temporary accommodation

The number of households living in temporary accommodation in England rose 89 per cent over the past decade to 104,000 households at the end of March 2023 – the highest figures since records began in 1998.

The severe shortage of social housing means councils are being forced to pay to house people in private temporary accommodation, including hotels and B&Bs, while they wait for a permanent home.

Dwindling supply is further compounded by the rising cost of living and – up until November's Autumn Statement (see p5 and p10) – frozen Local Housing Allowance rates, which have been driving increases in homelessness and reducing councils' ability to source suitable accommodation.

The LGA continues to call for long-term funding certainty to help councils deliver an ambitious build programme of 100,000 high-quality, climate-friendly social homes a year.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "Councils are under mounting pressure to find suitable homes for an ever-increasing number of people and are doing the best they can under current circumstances.

"A plethora of issues has meant that council budgets are being squeezed and the chronic shortage of suitable housing means that councils are increasingly having to turn to alternative options for accommodation at a significant cost.

"Councils need to be given the powers and resources to build enough social homes for their residents so they can create a more prosperous place to live, with healthier and happier communities."



Asylum seeker hotels to close

Fifty hotels will be closed to asylum seekers by January, the Government has announced.

The LGA has written to Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick, raising concerns around the challenges those leaving hotels may face finding affordable, long-term accommodation, given acute housing shortages and rising demand for homes across the country.

The letter also called for a joint and funded approach, nationally, regionally and locally, to manage the move on from asylum accommodation.

Separately, the LGA has raised concerns about councils being asked to commit to hosting a particular number of arrivals or proposing a cap, as per the Government's recent announcement of an annual

refugee cap, coming into effect in January 2025.

Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA, said: "Councils have a proud history of supporting humanitarian efforts and continue to work hard to help deliver a wide range of government asylum and resettlement schemes.

"Combined pressures from these many schemes are growing on councils and there continues to be an issue across the refugee and asylum system.

"We need a joined-up approach to the cumulative pressures on local services from all asylum and resettlement programmes. This needs to include urgent solutions to our pressing housing needs in the short and the long term across all the schemes that welcome new arrivals to the UK."

'Good' ratings in pilot CQC assessments

Four of the five local authorities helping pilot new adult social care assessments have been given 'good' indicative ratings by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The assessments form part of a new assurance framework for 153 councils in England with responsibility for adult social care, due to start in December.

The CQC looked at nine quality statements to assess how well each pilot local authority is meeting its responsibilities. Common themes included:

- Outcomes for people were better where there was good partnership working.
- Integrated working around discharging people from hospital was working and had improved the flow out of hospitals.
- Staff tended to stay with a local authority when they felt valued, had learning and development opportunities, and where there was a positive culture.
- Different practices across the five local authorities meant young people's experiences of transitioning from children's to adult services were varied.

Based on the pilots, the CQC is making changes to its assessment approach, including simplifying the information it requires of councils and further developing how it engages with the public.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, thanked the pilot councils, adding: "This is an important moment for adult social care, a lot of work from across the sector has gone into the preparation and execution of these assessments.

"It is clear CQC has taken valuable learning from the process and is committed to improving their approach for full rollout. The LGA will meet the pilot councils to understand their views on their indicative rating as we move into full rollout."



Unpaid carers 'suffer poor mental health'

A lack of support and recognition from health and care services is damaging unpaid carers' mental health, research from Carers UK shows.

People caring around-the-clock for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives do not have adequate support from statutory services that are in place to help them.

More than a quarter of unpaid carers are in bad or very bad mental health, rising to 31 per cent of those caring for more than 50 hours a week, or over 10 years.

Most carers with bad or very bad mental health (68 per cent) are living with a sense of fear or dread.

Despite feeling they are at breaking point, nearly three-quarters of these carers are continuing to provide care.

Not getting support is taking its toll on unpaid carers, who are having to wait long periods for health treatment or are putting it off because of the demands they face.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This research is incredibly concerning.

"Unpaid carers provide vital support for thousands of people every day, which councils fully recognise and want to help in any way they can.

"If we are to achieve our aspirations for all unpaid carers – who are needed in increasing numbers to address the rise in those needing care – and ensure caring doesn't impact on their health and wellbeing, we must tackle wider issues within adult social care services."

• See p19



Largest children's care providers 'made £300m profit'

The largest independent providers of children's social care made profits of more than £300 million last year, according to an LGA-commissioned report.

The report, by Revolution Consulting, revealed council spending on privately run children's homes more than doubled in the past six years as demand has increased.

In 2021/22, local authorities in England spent £1.5 billion on independently run residential care for vulnerable children – an 11 per cent increase on the previous year – and up from £736.6 million in 2015/16, representing a 105 per cent increase overall.

At the same time, the aggregate fee income of the 20 largest independent children's social care placement providers (excluding CareTech) was £1.63 billion last year, increasing by 6.5 per cent over the previous year.

Figures show 19 per cent of this was recorded as profit – amounting to £310 million overall.

The report also identifies a significant number of mergers and acquisitions taking place, which have led to concerns about the impact of such activity on children living in provision.

It says that despite the data obtained, visibility of financial information has made it difficult to give a clear picture of the care provider market. The LGA is calling for greater financial oversight of the largest providers.

Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "What matters most for children who can't live with their birth parents is that they feel safe, loved and supported, in homes that best suit their needs.

"While many providers work hard to make sure this is the case, it is wrong that some providers are making excessive profit from providing these homes when money should be spent on children."

The King's Speech

The Government has plans for 21 bills, including five on law and order

There was much fanfare, literal and otherwise, as His Majesty delivered the first King's Speech in 72 years on 7 November

The King's Speech, written by the Government, sets out the legislation, regulation, white and green papers, and the general themes for the parliamentary year ahead.

This year's monarch's speech contained more words than any since 2005, but has promised just 21 pieces of legislation.

These include five bills on law and order, a commitment to annual oil and gas licensing rounds, the promised smoking ban, and some important but rather complicated pledges around technology, autonomous vehicles, and artificial intelligence.

A number of bills of interest to local government have been carried over from the previous session of Parliament, having run out of time.

These include the Renters (Reform) Bill that hopes to achieve better standards in the private rented sector and the removal of 'no fault' evictions.

We will continue to work with government to ensure that councils have the right powers, skills, capacity and resources to undertake effective enforcement activity.

Also carried over is the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill.

The bill seeks to remove the possibility for public bodies, including councils, to campaign against, boycott, seek divestment from, or sanction a particular territory internationally, unless endorsed by the Government's own foreign policy (see **first** 687).

We are concerned that this bill could stifle appropriate and proper discussion at pension committee meetings about concerns relating to investments' risk



factors. Geopolitical and territorial factors are relevant to the risk of making, or retaining, certain investments.

Having been promised during party conference season, the Tobacco and Vapes Bill will bring about the Government's commitment to create the first smokefree generation (see p25).

We believe this is a progressive piece of legislation that would undoubtedly impact on population-level smoking prevalence, and ultimately reduce rates of smoking-related disease. Smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable ill health, disability, and death in England.

The King's Speech also introduced the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill. Sometimes known as Martyn's Law, the bill will introduce a new duty to protect public premises from terrorism.

Councils take threats from terrorism extremely seriously and work hard alongside wider partners to keep their communities safe. We expressed concern when this bill was being drafted, about the potential impact of the legislation on local communities, community groups and small businesses.

We therefore welcome the announcement of a further consultation to ensure requirements for standard

tier premises (public premises with a capacity of 100–799 people) within scope are proportionate and not unduly burdensome.

We also welcome the introduction of the Pedicabs (London) Bill. The bill will enable Transport for London (TfL) to regulate London's pedicabs and protect passengers by conferring powers on TfL to bring forward a licensing regime for pedicabs, in a similar way to local authorities throughout the rest of England and Wales.

Alongside this, the Automated Vehicles Bill intends to be one of the world's most comprehensive legal frameworks for self-driving vehicles.

Autonomous vehicles have the potential to dramatically improve people's quality of life, especially in areas where bus services struggle to support them.

However, the provisions in the bill make it even more pressing that there is urgent reform to the outdated legislation that governs taxi and PHV licensing – something the LGA has consistently called for.



See www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses for the LGA's full briefing on the King's Speech

The Autumn Statement

Calls to ease budget pressures in children's services and adult social care ignored



The evidence of the financial strain on councils has been growing and it is hugely disappointing that the Autumn Statement failed to provide the funding needed to protect the services the people in our communities rely on every day.

With more than 80,000 looked after children in England, the LGA and its partners were disappointed by the lack of reference to children's services, as well as to funding for early years and support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This lack of investment risks councils' ability to provide the critical care and support that children rely on every day, and risks diverting essential funding from other council services.

The Government has acted on our urgent and consistent calls to restore Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of market rents, which is a hugely positive step in increasing the security of housing, reducing homelessness and supporting the most vulnerable in our society.

It has also acted on our calls for a third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, worth £450 million, which will help councils support families to move into their own homes and reduce homelessness risks amid reduced supply of temporary and 'move-on' accommodation for councils.

The Government should build on these announcements by implementing

our six-point plan to give local government the powers and funding to deliver thousands of social homes a year (see tinyurl.com/2stspk64).

It is disappointing and concerning that the Autumn Statement provides no new investment for adult social care and the LGA will keep lobbying on this.

Waiting lists for care assessment or the provision of support remain stubbornly high; serious recruitment and retention challenges continue to beset the workforce; unmet and under-met need remains; instability continues to characterise the provider sector; and directors of adult social services remain worried that their budgets are insufficient to meet all of their statutory duties.

The Government has committed to ensuring councils will be able to set planning fees to cover the full cost of processing some major applications, which will mean local taxpayers no longer have to foot the bill. This is positive, but we look forward to seeing more details in due course.

It is, however, disappointing that the Government continues its drive to extend national permitted development rights further, with plans to consult on a new right to subdivide houses into two flats without changing the façade.

We welcome the increase in the National Living Wage, but local authorities must be sufficiently funded to meet the additional costs of this to avoid further unsustainable pressures on local public services.

Business rates

- Small business multiplier in England frozen for a fourth year.
- Current 75 per cent relief for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties extended for 2024/25, a tax cut worth £2.4 billion.

LGA view: "The measures will provide support to a range of businesses. It is positive that the Government has provided assurance that local authorities will be fully compensated for them. We are disappointed that the Government has not announced measures to combat business rates avoidance and evasion."

5G Innovation Regions

- 10 regions awarded funding to establish themselves as 5G Innovation Regions, following competition for a £40 million adoption fund.

LGA view: "This will help support councils and combined authorities to drive the adoption of 5G. We remain concerned about the use of a time-consuming and resource-intensive bidding process, and that councils in rural communities continue to lag behind more densely populated areas in the roll-out of 5G."

Devolution gives local leaders greater freedom to take decisions closest to the people they represent. Where they are supported by all councils, it is good to see new devolution deals in the Autumn Statement, including to parts of England outside cities.

This needs to signal a genuine 'local first' approach to policy making across Whitehall, to ensure as many communities as possible benefit from devolution, including the removal of burdensome negotiations and top-down imposition of new structures.

The Autumn Statement introduced measures to support businesses and

i This is an edited version of '[Autumn Statement 2023: LGA briefing](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)', which can be read in full at www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses. In addition to more detail on the issues covered here, the briefing also looks at public spending, improving access to levelling up funding, extension of the housing revenue account borrowing discount, planning fees and capacity building, permitted development rights, mental health, Back to Work plan, apprenticeships, delivering a world-class education system (new baccalaureate), Local Government Pension Scheme, investment zones, freeports, growth funding, new grid infrastructure, public sector productivity, and digital technology and AI



Devolution

- Two new mayoral deals with Greater Lincolnshire, and Hull and East Yorkshire.
- Two new non-mayoral deals with Lancashire and Cornwall.
- Non-mayoral devolution powers to be offered to councils that cover a functional economic or whole county area.
- New framework published for extending deeper devolution to existing mayoral combined authorities.

LGA view: "We continue to support the ambition that every area of England can secure a devolution deal that works for them and their residents by the end of the decade. We support calls for a National Devolution Baseline for England, with powers made available to every council that wants them, without the need for a lengthy process of negotiation or local governance reform."

Nutrient neutrality mitigation fund

- \$110 million through the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund, for local nutrient offsetting schemes.

LGA view: "The additional funding is welcome as councils are working hard to develop short-term solutions to unlock housing, such as wetland schemes. We want to work with government on long-term solutions to funding, partnerships, and a more proactive role for the regulators and agencies in protecting rivers and preventing pollution at source."

Homes for Ukraine sponsorship

- \$500 'thank you' payments continue into a third year for Homes for Ukraine sponsors.
- \$120 million for homeless prevention, including to support Ukrainian households who can no longer remain in sponsorship.

LGA view: "This continued funding will help to maintain sponsorship arrangements and reduce the risks of homelessness presentations from Ukrainian families. However, considering inflation and energy costs faced by hosts, support and the 'thank you' payment need to increase to increase the pool of sponsors."

Energy security and net zero

- Extension of UK Emissions Trading Scheme to cover emissions from waste in 2028.

LGA view: "We support the ambition to reduce carbon emissions from waste activity, but this should be done by support for waste reduction and making producers take more responsibility for the materials they put on the market. The LGA is concerned about passing extra cost on to local government without councils having any meaningful levers to reduce waste coming through."

Veterans

- An additional \$10 million for the Veterans' Places, People and Pathways Programme to increase support to vulnerable veterans.
- One-year extension of National Insurance contributions relief for employers of eligible veterans.

LGA view: "Additional funding will help to ensure that veterans in need of mental health support can access timely, effective, and integrated services. This funding needs to be made available through councils who want to work with armed forces charities, health, and other local partners to further strengthen mental health support for veterans."

ease the cost of living for households, and this is important – but not if our public services continue to be chronically underfunded and unable to support people when they need them.

Councils have worked hard to find efficiencies and reduce costs, but the easy savings have long since gone.

It is wrong that residents now face further cuts to services as well as the prospect of council tax rises next year, with councils having the difficult

choice about raising bills to bring in desperately needed funding.

National economic growth can ultimately only be achieved if every local economy is firing on all cylinders.

Only with the right powers and adequate long-term funding which allows councils to plan properly, can we play a lead role in unlocking the labour market, building new affordable homes, creating jobs, plugging skills gaps and delivering on other key government priorities.

Reform of grid connections

- Reform of grid connection process to cut waiting times, including freeing up more than 100GW of capacity.

LGA view: "Our research found councils have approved 1,300 clean energy schemes, like solar farms, that are still waiting to be built often due to lengthy waits for grid connections."

Future-proofing leisure facilities amid economic uncertainty

Despite the ongoing challenges facing local authorities across the UK, including the cost-of-living crisis, soaring energy costs, recovery from the COVID pandemic, and financial pressures on budgets, there continues to be significant appetite for capital investment in community leisure facilities. Alliance Leisure, the leading leisure development partner for public sector organisations, currently has more than £500 million of local leisure projects in various stages of scoping and construction. In addition, its research shows a further £1 billion of projects with other contractors or architects are in development across the UK.

Working with its local authority partners, Alliance Leisure is driving the ambition to provide the best possible sport, leisure and recreation facilities to support public health and wellbeing, reduce the burden on the NHS and social care, and deliver social value by reducing crime and delinquency, improving educational attainment and more.

One opportunity for local authorities to achieve these ambitions is through the UK Leisure Framework (UKLF). Collaborating with Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, the UKLF has the potential to deliver up to £2 billion worth of leisure projects across the UK. A highly efficient procurement route, the UKLF can speed up the early stages of a development by as much as six months, allowing authorities to act quickly and make considerable efficiencies. With construction inflation adding hundreds of thousands of pounds to delayed projects, this represents a huge saving for councils.

John Leaver, Marketing & Frameworks Director at Alliance Leisure, comments: "Our local authority partners are using the UK



Northcroft Lido in Newbury

Leisure Framework to bring modern, inclusive and fit-for-purpose sports and leisure facilities to market, from £20 million-plus new-build and refurbishment schemes to 3G pitch installations and outdoor play parks."

Northcroft Lido, at Northcroft Leisure Centre, Newbury, was launched this summer, following a £5.7 million redevelopment. Commissioned by West Berkshire Council and developed by Alliance Leisure through the UKLF, the new outdoor facilities include a 50-metre, Olympic-size swimming pool, a splash pad and fun slide, beach hut-style changing rooms, a sun terrace and a relaxation area, all of which are fully accessible. The new facilities are expected to accommodate 50,000 attendances each season, which has been extended to run from April to September as a result of the re-engineering works creating a more sustainable financial proposition.

Another scheme Alliance Leisure recently delivered through the UKLF is Harrogate Leisure and Wellness Centre, for North Yorkshire Council. Formerly known as Harrogate Hydro, the centre reopened in September after a £13.5 million refurbishment. The building's footprint was extended and the interior substantially

reimagined to create a bright, modern offering in keeping with the needs of today's vibrant and diverse community. The pool and leisure facilities were overhauled, with new additions including a 400sqm fitness suite, a Les Mills immersive cycle studio, a sauna and steam suite, plus a reconfigured reception and café. In the pool, a new diving structure will allow the centre to continue to support diving talent as it has done for Olympians such as Jack Laugher MBE and Oliver Dingley.

Energy efficiency was at the heart of the project, with air source heat pumps replacing gas boilers, and the installation of 250 solar panels, along with new energy monitoring and control systems – all of which are expected to halve the carbon footprint of the centre.

The UKLF is also delivering much-needed works as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), which supports the aim of reducing emissions from public sector buildings by 75 per cent by 2037. To date, Alliance Leisure has been involved in 23 PSDS leisure projects, with a total investment value of more than £30 million, helping local authorities to cut carbon and reduce energy costs.

**John Leaver,
of Alliance
Leisure**



i To find out how **Alliance Leisure** can help you meet your business objectives, email info@allianceleisure.co.uk or visit leisureframework.co.uk



Characteristics of effective ICPs

What have we learned about the role of integrated care partnerships in health and social care?



Councillor **David Fothergill** (far left) is Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, and Councillors **Tim Oliver** (centre) and **Tim Swift** are Co-chairs of the National ICP Chairs Forum

Now that integrated care partnerships (ICPs) have been up and running in England for well over a year, it is a good time to see what we have learnt so far about their role and how this could develop in future.

The LGA and NHS Confederation spoke to senior ICP leaders across the country – including many councillors – to get their views on the unique contribution of ICPs to what seems like an alphabet soup of organisations and partnership arrangements involved in health, wellbeing and social care.

We will shortly be publishing a report of the key themes and messages from the interviews. But, given the leading role of many councillors in ICPs, we wanted to give you a sneak preview of some of the findings.

The sheer variation of ICPs in terms of their structure, ways of working, priorities and future ambition is striking. But despite the diversity, the most effective ICPs share several essential characteristics.

First, they foster equal partnerships – between different parts of the NHS, between the NHS and local government, and between statutory partners and

ICP members from the community and voluntary sector.

ICPs focus on a long-term vision. They look beyond the immediate and urgent challenges facing the health and care sector to a future vision of better health for their communities, reduced health inequalities and a greater focus on prevention and wellbeing.

They empower decision-makers – at place and neighbourhood level, through support to health and wellbeing boards and other place-level partnerships.

ICPs embed mutual accountability, so that all partners hold themselves and each other to account for their individual and collective actions to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

They promote a trusting and open culture: many leaders said that the most important factor in leading change is promoting a shared culture of trust, mutual respect and transparency where tensions and disagreements can be addressed and overcome, rather than avoided.

And they enable wider participation: ICPs have a key role in giving voice to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, to the public and patients together with academia and

What is an ICP?

An integrated care board (ICB) is a statutory NHS organisation responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of the population, managing the NHS budget, and arranging for the provision of health services in a geographical area. An integrated care partnership (ICP) is a statutory committee of an ICB, jointly set up by the ICB and the local authorities within it. ICPs are required to develop an integrated care strategy to improve the health, public health and social care services provided to their population. For more information, see www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/what-is-integrated-care

local businesses, to develop a vision and action plan for getting better health outcomes for our communities.

Finally, they spend time getting the governance right, as there is no one perfect model of ICP governance. You need to spend time on designing the governance that is right for your system, building on and adding value to existing local partnerships, rather than duplicating or bypassing them.

It is still early days for ICPs but they are already looking to the future to identify how they will make a tangible difference on several fronts. They want to forge ahead with:

- developing integrated priorities and a shared vision for all partners
- shifting the focus and resources towards prevention
- addressing the wider determinants of health and health inequalities
- bringing the NHS into alignment with existing action on social and economic development.

What comes across most clearly from ICP leaders is their commitment to keeping a focus on how to get the best health and wellbeing outcomes for all of our communities.

The LGA and NHS Confederation will do all we can to support them to do this.



The full report will be available shortly at www.nhsconfed.org and www.local.gov.uk/topics/social-care-health-and-integration

Addressing economic inactivity

Local support is effective in helping more people into work



Councillor **Martin Tett** is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board

Today's biggest labour market challenge remains bringing down vacancy rates and reducing labour market shortages in a number of sectors while unemployment remains relatively low.

This is why, in the 2023 Spring Budget, the Government announced investment to encourage more working-age people who are economically inactive to return to work. 'Economically inactive' is defined as people who are not in employment, have not sought work in the past four weeks, and/or who are unable to start work in the next two weeks.

Currently, the number of economically inactive people in the UK stands at 8.7 million, but it is important to underline that this is not a homogenous group. It includes students, early retirees, those with caring responsibilities, and those with poor physical or mental health.

For those who want to get back to work, but struggle to find the right support or job, it is vital that we get that support right.

Councils and devolved authorities, working with their partners, play a key role in engaging economically inactive and unemployed people through devolved and discretionary employability programmes, but are keen to do more with the right powers and funding.

The LGA commissioned public policy consultancy Shared Intelligence



to look at the range of national and local programmes supporting economically inactive people into work, and the opportunities and challenges associated with addressing this issue locally.

The research identified a patchwork of 51 disjointed national programmes, services or initiatives operational in England in 2022/23 (see **first** 688).

While most of the programmes, to some extent, can support economically inactive people in finding or being ready for work, very few are labelled as addressing this issue.

This changed with the Spring Budget, when new initiatives to join up health and work services for disabled people and people with health conditions were announced, including a new Universal Support programme and Work Well pilots, plus other initiatives to help the over-50s and parents return to work.

When it came to place-based provision, the research identified a range of locally designed initiatives to address economic inactivity.

The research was supplemented by two 'deep dives' into work addressing economic inactivity in the North of Tyne Combined Authority and North East Essex (see panel, right).

Each deep dive involved a roundtable discussion with local partners, including local government,

Place-based activities

Warwickshire Supported Employment Service, delivered through the county's skills hub (see skillshub.warwickshire.gov.uk), supports autistic people or people with a learning difficulty to be ready for work. This includes one-to-one support from a guide who works with clients throughout their journey into work.

Link up Leigh Park, funded by the Health Foundation, focuses on 16 to 24-year-olds seeking to overcome barriers to work (see tinyurl.com/3m9377ty). It helps young people remain in education, guiding them back into training and work, and helping employers to connect with the community.

Households into Work in Liverpool City Region Combined Authority offers support to people who are struggling to take up paid work (see www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/households-into-work). Support includes a 'household budget' to pay for goods and services that may help clients overcome some of their obstacles.



health representatives and the voluntary sector.

Interviews with practitioners at local level indicate that working to reduce economic inactivity is a complex task and often takes time.

Individuals who most need support can be difficult to identify, particularly as they may not be in contact with the national benefits system or employment and skills support services.

The underlying causes of economic inactivity are often multifaceted – mixing factors such as family context, and mental and physical health conditions with compounding barriers to do with loss of confidence or self-esteem, or practical factors such as access to transport.

However, when work is done well, the benefit is considerable.

Evidence from the deep dives highlighted how employers welcome recruitment from a broader constituency of potential talent.

Careful wraparound support helps to build clients' confidence, reducing barriers to entering training and, eventually, the labour market. Further investment and targeted local support is also vital to bring services together.

The report identifies some core ingredients that need to be applied to make a success of work with economically inactive people such as:

- Support must be place-based, with local government well placed to coordinate it.
- Funding should be longer term, simplified and localised.
- Economically inactive people can often experience disadvantage and be isolated.
- Deep-seated causes of an individual's economic inactivity take time to diagnose.
- Support needs to be mainstream rather than time-limited.
- In-work support is vital, to help people hold down new jobs.

Local knowledge is essential to direct resources to where they are most needed and can have most effect.

Local government is using its local expertise and connections – alongside its roles as democratically elected leaders, trusted convenors, place shapers and leading members of integrated care boards – to bring partners together to address economic inactivity and unemployment.

It does this because it wants to avoid the effect this can have on people's prospects, household incomes, health and wellbeing, and on local communities and the wider local economy.

The LGA is now working with the Government to ensure any new support for this group is designed in the right way.

What has worked

North of Tyne Combined Authority

A number of local and North of Tyne-wide initiatives have sought to address economic inactivity in the area, including an employability hub, a return-to-work pilot for carers, and a partnership programme to help unemployed social tenants into jobs, education or training.

A key component of activity across the North of Tyne area has been linking employment-related support to other local public service 'touch points' with residents.

This wraparound support has been effective in reaching people who, experience shows, may otherwise have been reluctant to approach employment services.

For example, in the return-to-work pilot for carers, the motivation for engagement is that people want support for their caring responsibilities. From there, the programme has been able to work with those for whom caring creates barriers to employment or training.

North East Essex

A number of local initiatives have sought to address socioeconomic factors that link to economic inactivity in North East Essex, covering Tendring District Council and Colchester City Council.

Volunteering has been a very effective bridge from economic inactivity to work in the area.

Not-for-profit CVS Tendring and charity Community360 work to recruit volunteers to work in community assets, such as charity retail shops. The training associated with this naturally moves volunteers closer to being able to contemplate economic activity.

Partners stressed that careful support and mentoring is needed. Both organisations work to buddy vulnerable volunteers with more experienced peers or staff members. They are encouraged to join social events and to take steps towards achievable progression goals.

A similar model is used by the Tendring Mental Health Hub. In a year-long placement, the aim is for volunteers to learn retail and customer service skills, as well as participate in other activities tailored to their interests.



This is an edited version of '[Make It Local: local government's vital role in addressing economic inactivity](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications)', which can be downloaded and read in full at www.local.gov.uk/publications

Acting on climate change

Empowering councils to act locally would halve the cost of delivering net zero nationally



Councillor **Darren Rodwell** is Chair of the LGA's Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board

Climate change is one of the biggest threats facing our communities and ranks high in people's priorities.

Eight in 10 are concerned by it, three-quarters want to deliver net zero by 2050, and half want to bring that target forward.

Councils recognise the urgency and scale of this challenge, with more than 300 – plus the LGA – declaring climate emergencies.



Their central role in housing, transport and energy means councils have some impact on more than 80 per cent of an area's greenhouse emissions, and direct impact on over a third of emissions.

The impact of taking local action on climate change can be enormous.

The Government's own research found that local climate action would achieve net zero by 2050 for half the cost of a national approach and deliver three times the financial returns and wider benefits.

Local government is united in our call for devolved approaches to realise this potential – a call we reiterated in late October in a letter to Claire Coutinho, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, signed together with colleagues from the District Councils' Network, County Councils Network and London Councils.

Unfortunately, it is still unclear how councils fit into the national plan for net zero and climate adaptation.

Councils receive no core funding for climate action and are forced to compete for short-term

pots of funding that come and go over time, taking up resources and creating uncertainty.

Take heat networks for instance – there are four schemes. For retrofitting homes and buildings, there are six. For decarbonising transport, there are nine. For woodland and trees, there are eight.

The model has not worked. Too many centrally controlled programmes remain underspent and underwhelming. Some interventions even contradict others, for instance spending on the social housing decarbonisation fund is undermined by cuts via the social housing rent cap.

We want government to back local climate action by putting in place a national climate action framework with policy, regulatory, and investment certainty up to 2050, with set milestones and a clear role for councils leading local climate action.

All councils need adequate and stable core funding to take forward climate action across their

Ten missions for local climate action

The LGA's Make It Local campaign is calling for national and local government to accelerate local climate action on 10 missions. These are:

1. Build public trust and inclusivity – by stepping up engagement on the community benefits of climate action, including street-by-street help for households.
2. Rapidly retrofit social and fuel-poor homes – by bringing forward funding and devolving the majority to councils.
3. One Public Estate retrofit – bringing forward investments in the whole-place retrofitting of local public buildings (councils, schools, hospitals), in single, scaled programmes.
4. Local energy revolution – establishing a pipeline of projects for local energy generation, capture and use, involving councils and the local electricity system.
5. Electric and people-powered transport – delivering whole-place transport by devolving to councils the means to locally mix active travel, electric vehicles, and public transport.
6. Grow the natural world everywhere – ask all policy and programmes to protect and grow biodiversity, not just planning, and empower councils to drive nature recovery.
7. Place-making to reduce emissions and raise adaptation – expand the Future Homes Standard into place-making on climate action and allow councils to enforce higher standards.
8. Jobs, opportunity, workforce – enable councils to link skills, careers advice and employment interventions with national reform and local climate action and job creation.
9. Funding and finance – reform public funding for local climate action, including by providing long-term core funding certainty to councils.
10. Accelerating local adaptation – prioritise adaptation alongside net zero in everything, with a five-year local adaptation accelerator programme.



Staffordshire's carbon bubble with Year 7 pupils from St John Fisher Catholic College in Newcastle-under-Lyme

"All councils need adequate and stable core funding to take forward climate action"

own services; multi-year place-based funding allocations to lead decarbonisation across their areas; and support to secure greater private investment into local climate action.

Ministers also need to introduce a 'local climate action test', ensuring all government policy and funding decisions – from housing to skills – contribute to local climate action.

Climate change is creating a new era of opportunity, as the mission for safeguarding a habitable future brings about the best in innovation and creativity, and the greatest growth opportunity since the industrial revolution.

Human ingenuity has created increasingly better and cheaper

technologies that harness abundant, free, clean energy – wind, water, and sun – to power every aspect of our way of life.

But having technology is one thing, deploying it everywhere is another. On this, councils are critical.

National action is essential in setting the framework and taking the big decisions. But transition will be different in each of our cities, towns and villages, and that complexity cannot be managed from a Whitehall desk.

Only councils working locally with partners can embed and connect this creativity and ingenuity into the everyday lives of people in the real world.

Carbon bubble: engaging with residents

Climate change is a challenging subject: most people only have a very vague understanding of what concepts such as 'greenhouse gases', 'net zero' and 'carbon footprints' mean.

Staffordshire County Council wanted to find ways to break down these terms and make them relatable for residents, to encourage them to take meaningful actions to help combat climate change.

It started by tackling people's understanding of 'carbon' – by using an enormous, vibrant orange sphere emblazoned with the words 'One tonne of CO₂'.

The carbon bubble was used at eight events across Staffordshire to spark meaningful conversations with residents, with council climate change experts on hand to answer questions and debunk common carbon myths.

There were face-to-face conversations with more than 1,000 residents; more than 340 people used the council's carbon calculator to assess their carbon footprint; and the visits helped achieve 3,471 responses to a climate change consultation.

Tree canopy cover

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils had no clear picture of what tree cover their areas had, nor how much trees contributed to the local environment.

They used Bluesky's National Tree Map to establish tree canopy cover across both predominantly rural districts and found it was well below the national average.

They then used a range of available data to identify both where there is potential space for new tree planting, and where new planting would provide maximum benefits to the environment.

This has supported a successful application under the Local Authority Tree Fund to plant more than 1,800 trees with the grant awarded valued at £50,000, and completed this winter.

Elsewhere, the councils' planting strategy is contributing to the design of a new public open space, supporting a local school to encourage more tree planting in its parish, and helping to justify new street tree planting on highway land.



To find out more about the LGA's proposals for acting on climate change – part of its **Make It Local campaign** – please visit www.local.gov.uk/make-it-local-acting-climate-change, and see left for its 10 missions for local climate action



For more information about these and other case studies of **how councils are tackling climate change**, including videos and contact details, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/2s3cpma8>. See also p28-29

Turning empty houses into homes

A new report aims to help bring vacant properties back into use



Councillor **Darren Rodwell** is Chair of the LGA's Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board

Against a backdrop of increasing housing demand, bringing empty homes back into use can play a key part in local strategies to meet housing need.

Not only are empty homes a wasted resource, they are often the subject of complaints and frustration for communities, as well as a catalyst for crime and degradation.

Councils across England are deemed to be best placed to tackle the issue of empty homes by encouraging and supporting their owners to bring them back into use, and by enforcement action where their condition is detrimental to a neighbour or community.

However, while some councils have dedicated teams, officers or departments to carry out this service, dealing with an empty home is not a statutory function.

New research from the LGA and the Empty Homes Network has identified that councils largely take a reactive approach to dealing with empty homes, tackling issues and complaints as they are received and when resources allow.

While some councils operate a wholly proactive approach by targeting challenging cases and taking time to cleanse housing data and reduce numbers, many councils – because of their capacity and resources – do not have the opportunity to do both.

We believe a shift in mindset, through increasing the ability for councils to be more proactive in their



approach, will widely see the numbers of empty homes reduced.

Although understanding that council pressures mean that non-statutory functions are less of a priority, our report recommends that councils should, as a minimum, consider employing a dedicated empty homes officer, or explore the opportunities that dual roles with other relevant functions could provide.

'A practical approach for councils on dealing with empty homes' contains case studies exploring different approaches that councils have taken to this issue, and its recommendations are intended to provoke thought and action, and to support councils to think differently.

It suggests councils could consider broadening their definition and remit of empty homes work to include homes left empty for less than six months to reduce the flow of properties reaching that mark, as well as exploring the opportunities offered by second and unoccupied exempt homes.

It also suggests empowering officers through tools readily available to councils, such as allowing access to read-only council tax data and

delegating enforcement powers directly to empty homes officers, as more than a third of those surveyed for this research did not have the authority to do so.

Several best practice tools are proposed with the intention of improving data recording and accuracy, including the implementation of an empty homes database, a guide for the progression of cases, and an information-source checklist to identify knowledge gaps.

Of the empty homes practitioners surveyed, 23 per cent were not aware of whether their empty homes statistics reported through the council taxbase were accurate. The best practice tools and approaches set out in our report aim to go some way to fixing this.

In exploring the numbers, resources and best practice elements of empty homes, it is hoped the report will encourage councils with existing empty homes officers to continue to develop their work further.

We also hope it will help councils that currently don't have dedicated officers to begin exploring the issues, and help equip them to bring much-needed empty homes back into use.

i 'A practical approach for councils on dealing with empty homes' can be downloaded for free at www.local.gov.uk/publications/practical-approach-councils-dealing-empty-homes. With more than 700 individual members, **the Empty Homes Network** is the prominent voice, support and resource community for empty homes officers and practitioners across the country – see <https://ehnetwork.org.uk/>

Diverse by **design**

A social care workforce that reflects our communities will serve them better



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

Councils aspire for their workforce to reflect the people and communities who draw on services, care and support.

Widening participation in the adult social care workforce supports us with this aspiration.

Consequently, the LGA and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, as Partners in Care and Health, have published 'Diverse by design: a workbook for adult social care'.

This workbook can help officers and cabinet members responsible for adult social care, and those responsible for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), identify improvements so that the workforce better reflects, and so better serves, our local communities.

It can also support councils in England with the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) new assurance framework for adult social care, by enabling leaders and managers to evidence how they are promoting EDI in their service, including for their staff.

This is something CQC will check during inspections.

Building on the corporate 'Diverse by design guide' published by the LGA in 2021, the workbook sets out 15 elements for EDI that are fundamental to helping to embed fair values, systems and behaviours in the workplace.

These elements can be considered in any order and at a pace to suit individual organisations' workplace priorities. One step at a time, the workbook enables council employers to champion and implement change and embed the practice of inclusion.

For example, element one focuses on data. Being clear with what you want to achieve in being a more inclusive organisation will help you to decide the data you need to generate insight and drive action.

The elements also cover how to talk about equality and diversity, rethinking recruitment processes, having role models, and creating and engaging staff networks.

Knowing where to start with EDI can seem daunting, so the workbook includes a self-assessment tool to help councils identify their baseline.

Employers can measure their organisation against the 15 elements and assess the extent to which the workforce has been engaged as stakeholders in an inclusive workplace environment.

'Diverse by design: a workbook for adult social care' provides a framework that will support council employers to articulate strengths in EDI practice and identify areas for organisational improvement.

It seeks to support councils to move beyond compliance and build inclusivity into the culture of the adult social care workforce.



'Diverse by design: a workbook for adult social care' is available to download at www.local.gov.uk/pch/diverse-by-design-asc

New support for unpaid carers

Demonstrating support for unpaid carers is a key criterion for councils preparing for assessments of their adult social care services by the Care Quality Commission.

The LGA and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, as Partners in Care and Health, are developing a new resource which we hope will serve as a handy guide to the key principles and duties placed on councils by the Care Act 2014 towards the many people who provide unpaid care to those affected by ill-health or disabilities.

The Care Act 2014 represented a historic step forward, for the first time placing unpaid carers on the same footing as the people they care for and giving them statutory rights to things such as assessment and support.

'Handy summary: the Care Act and unpaid carers' will bring together the salient points in one place and will be a useful point of reference for anyone keen to refresh their understanding about what the Care Act has to say about unpaid carers.

The guide will be available soon at www.local.gov.uk/partners-care-and-health and, if you are reading this at the National Children and Adult Services Conference in Bournemouth, you can find out more from the Partners in Care and Health stand there (D30).





Graduate recruitment

Injecting new talent into local government

Graduate trainees in discussion
© Peter Medlicott

Every year, thousands of graduates from all over England and Wales apply to the National Graduate Development Programme to begin and fast-track their careers in local government.

The LGA-run programme is the only national graduate scheme for the sector, and has been injecting new talent into local government and developing a pipeline of future leaders for more than 20 years.

It offers councils the opportunity to recruit highly motivated and capable management trainees to work on important projects over a two-year period.

The most recently recruited cohort started work this autumn, and more

than 270 graduate trainees were placed across 100-plus councils.

This was also the largest and most diverse cohort yet, with 29 per cent of trainees being from a black, Asian or ethnic minority background and 12 per cent declaring a disability – helping ensure they reflect the diverse communities that councils serve.

The LGA undertakes extensive marketing and runs a subsidised, rigorous national recruitment process to place high-calibre graduates with councils across England and Wales.

Participating councils have access to a national pool of graduates who have passed a multi-stage recruitment process and only the best candidates are selected to interview with councils.

Trainees rotate through a minimum

of three placements within their host authorities and benefit from an accredited learning and development programme, which includes a Chartered Management Institute postgraduate-level qualification in strategic leadership and management.

The learning and development programme includes virtual and in-person events, tutorials, group work, and course assignments, and is delivered by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace), working with the University of Birmingham.

Graduate interest in the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) is rising and the programme is expected to continue to grow.

To ensure demand from graduates can be met, the number of participating councils must increase to create more places on this competitive scheme.

Councils that have not previously been involved are encouraged to tap into the NGDP as a key organisational development resource, thereby building internal capacity and resilience in their workforces while nurturing fresh talent.

A head for numbers

The LGA has launched a pilot NGDP stream for finance this year, with 21 London boroughs and the Metropolitan Police Force looking to recruit graduates.

The NGDP Finance Graduate Scheme is a specialised stream, designed for those who want to pursue a career in public finance. It offers a unique and tailored

development pathway into local government and other public services for aspiring finance professionals.

The four-year programme is geared towards developing graduates with a passion for finance and communities into future local government and public sector leaders, helping them gain practical experience while studying.

Graduates will work towards the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Level 7 Apprenticeship, which includes CIPFA's Professional Accountancy Qualification, the key qualification for anyone pursuing a career in public finance management.

To find out more, please visit www.local.gov.uk/ngdp

i If you would like to find out how the **NGDP** could help your council build capacity and develop your future leaders, please visit our website at www.local.gov.uk/ngdp-councils or get in touch with the team for an informal chat by emailing ngdp@local.gov.uk. Councils have until 29 February to sign up for the NGDP

Peer support

The LGA's member peers are a key part of our improvement offer



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

It was great to see so many of you at the LGA's Member Peer Conference in Bristol in November.

For the first time, the conference was held over two days, with 140 member peers from across the country gathered at what is a critical time for local government and sector-led improvement (SLI).

Developments such as the establishment of the Office for Local Government, and a series of high-profile cases concerning a small number of challenged councils, have led to an increased focus on council performance, and questions around what we can do to deliver greater improvement and assurance for our sector.

The conference gave us time together to consider the role of SLI in this context, including what this means for the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) programme and our work as member peers.

A thought-provoking and engaging keynote address was delivered by experienced commissioners Tony McArdle OBE, Best Value Inspector

at Thurrock Council and Lead Commissioner at the London Borough of Croydon, and Gavin Jones, Chief Executive of Essex County Council and Lead Commissioner at Slough Borough Council and Thurrock Council.

Both shared insights and learning from their work with challenged councils that are subject to intervention, including what this means for SLI and CPC.

Key themes highlighted were the importance of strong and effective political and managerial leadership, positive organisational culture and narrative, robust approaches to governance, financial oversight, and risk management.

We also heard from Torbay Council's Leader, Cllr David Thomas, and Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond, about the council's significant improvement journey, which led to it being named Most Improved Council at the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2023.

A key take-away was how Torbay's openness to external challenge and learning – through SLI and CPC – has been instrumental to its improvement journey.

Peers also participated in a series of development sessions – covering assurance and governance, the future of SLI, people services and regulation, and transformation, and a separate

Mentoring handbook

Councillor mentoring undertaken by the LGA's member peers is an important part of our Sector Support programme, funded by the UK Government. Our councillor mentoring helps councils and councillors to receive the support they need to deliver services to the public as effectively as possible. 'The councillor mentoring handbook' looks at the mentoring relationship, and provides resources for practical support and downloadable forms to track mentoring progress – see www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillor-mentoring-handbook

session on Corporate Peer Challenge for less-experienced peers. There were also some practical demonstrations of LG Inform, the LGA's free benchmarking tool, which can be used to explore the performance of councils.

We also delivered a highly energetic, interactive and fun 'Open Space', facilitated by Peter Fleming OBE. Peers set the agenda, with topics ranging from 'how to get the most out of meetings' to a more serious and, in my view, often neglected area of focus for councillors – 'how to look after our own mental health and wellbeing'.

We will certainly be looking to replicate this approach at our future peer conferences.

The conference also provided lots of opportunities to network.

I hope, like me, peers left the conference with learning and new ideas, feeling energised, enthused and motivated, so they can continue to champion SLI across the sector.

As Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, I am committed to working with my fellow board members and national and regional peers, to take forward the feedback and insights from the conference and ensure that we use this to inform our thinking in the year ahead, so that we can ensure that our SLI offer is 'best in class'.



LGA Head of Research and Information Juliet Whitworth (centre) demonstrating LG Inform, the LGA's data benchmarking tool, to Cllr Andrew Scopes (Leeds) and Cllr Debby Hallett (Vale of White Horse)

i To find out more about the **LGA's peer support programme**, please visit www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-assurance-and-peer-support. Presentations from the conference are available at www.local.gov.uk/events

One Public Estate

Releasing land and property for regeneration and new homes for 10 years



Councillor **Shaun Davies** is Chair of the LGA

In 2013, the Cabinet Office and the LGA took a bold step by piloting the One Public Estate programme.

The aim was to bring public sector partners together to make the best use of our surplus land and property; to deliver local growth, including jobs and homes; create financial efficiencies; and deliver more integrated, accessible public services.

One Public Estate (OPE) is proud to have helped central and local government partners in England work better together over the past 10 years, with 69 locally led OPE partnerships currently exploring, developing and delivering joint property projects.

Partners include 13 government departments, 311 councils and hundreds of other public sector bodies such as health and emergency services.

Our partnership approach creates some quick wins. For example, we connected HM Probation Service with Luton Council, which resulted in the

Since 2013, the One Public Estate programme has delivered:



service relocating to council-owned offices, addressing pressing premises needs and generating revenue for the council.

More than 800 live OPE projects across England are kickstarting regeneration and transforming public service delivery, by creating thriving community hubs, meeting specialist local housing needs, and improving the way services work together.

Our partnerships are proud of the difference made for citizens,

while delivering capital receipts for reinvestment, reducing running costs for improved public sector efficiency, providing land for homes and jobs, and co-locating services.

Since 2017, OPE has partnered with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to deliver the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) on its behalf, working with the network of OPE partnerships.

With more than £250 million awarded to councils to date, BLRF

Maximising municipal assets in Codsall, South Staffordshire

Situated in rural Staffordshire, Codsall is a public service centre for surrounding communities, and the home of South Staffordshire District Council.

Occupying a large, municipal 1960s building, the council recognised the potential to co-locate multiple public services, delivering more integrated, accessible public services, reduced running costs, and a smaller carbon footprint.

One Public Estate (OPE) provided £125,000 to complete an outline business case and supported partners to develop their initial concept into detailed plans, and then through to delivery.

The Codsall Community Hub

opened in July 2022, with the old South Staffordshire District Council headquarters refurbished, extended and transformed into a vibrant building, hosting 25 organisations across the public, private, and community sectors and providing an integrated, modern, energy-efficient working environment.

Partners occupying the hub include a new library, GP surgery, a nursery, the South Staffordshire NHS Trust, a podiatrist, police, three tiers of local government, plus small businesses and voluntary organisations.

New homes are being provided for Codsall through the sale of surplus council and police-owned assets, which

generated more than £3.4 million in capital receipts for local reinvestment.

In addition, partners are collectively saving more than £500,000 in running costs over a 10-year period.

The project won a gold award for asset management and regeneration at the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise's national Public Sector Transformation Awards 2022.

Meanwhile, the OPE approach has become embedded among local partners. The partnership working that developed through the Codsall project has directly led to the police, NHS and county council estate teams reviewing and aligning their asset strategies.

Integrated public services in Mildenhall, Suffolk

Like many English market towns, public services in Mildenhall were delivered from multiple sites dispersed across the town, with many consisting of ageing buildings that were poorly used and costly to run.

The One Public Estate (OPE) programme brought central and local government, the wider public sector and voluntary partners together to explore alternatives.

Consequently, Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk Council (and its predecessor Forest Heath District Council), the Department for Work and Pensions, the police, NHS, Mildenhall College Academy and Citizens Advice developed an ambitious plan to exit five properties and create a multi-agency hub on a single site.

As well as ongoing support



for partner collaboration, the OPE programme provided resources to help build the business case and worked with the Department for Education on re-routing maintenance funds into the new hub, ensuring the scheme's viability.

The Mildenhall Hub was officially opened in autumn

2021, bringing together public services to improve health, wellbeing, and education for the community.

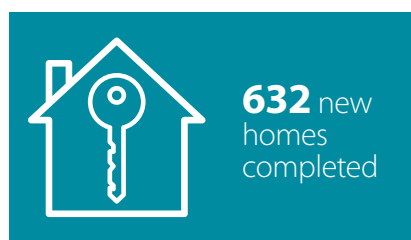
Outcomes for the Mildenhall community have been transformational. For example, community health teams and leisure services work together to offer a

joined-up exercise referral scheme that supports patient rehabilitation; and a full-time family hub is jointly delivering children's community and health services.

By co-locating leisure services with the library, both have seen an increased uptake of services, with participation in swimming lessons up 45 per cent on pre-covid statistics, and more than 700 new library members.

The reduced public estate footprint provides savings of over £20 million over 25 years; communities have benefited from an upgraded, accessible and integrated approach to their local services; and vacated sites have provided 1.7 hectares of surplus land, accommodating 59 new homes.

Since 2017, the Brownfield Land Release Fund has delivered:



projects are unlocking council-owned sites for housing.

BLRF funding addresses the constraints that sometimes prevent sites identified for housing coming forward, resolving viability issues such as demolition, remediation and small-scale infrastructure.

By March 2027, land is forecast to be released for 23,700 homes.

If this has inspired you to think about how your council's land or property might support your local housing needs, please speak to your senior housing officer about applying for BLRF funding (see blue circle, right).

If your council has not applied for BLRF before, or you have concerns

that your local land values are not high enough to qualify, please give your regional OPE team a call.

We would love to speak to councils about local authority-owned brownfield land and your housing ambition. We can offer advice, guidance and support for your officers if you don't feel you have the expertise to put in an application.

The OPE team is working hard to develop a support offer for our partners. More details about this, and some new funding opportunities, will be available in the new year.

Up to £80 million will shortly be available in the last and final round of the Brownfield Land Release Fund Round 2 (BLRF2.3) to help release small and medium-sized sites for new housing. Look out for more information on our website, at www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate

Independent living for older people in Rochford, Essex

As part of a programme to provide homes for older people with care needs, Essex County Council and Rochford District Council worked together to repurpose a former adult community college site in Rochford.

Set in a large plot of unused space, the college had been vacant for several years.

A Brownfield Land Release Fund award of £125,000 was used to demolish the old college, freeing up the site for the development of 74 new homes.

Fourteen three-bed and four-bed family homes have been completed, and 60 homes will be purpose-built for older people to meet the growing demands of Essex's ageing population. Regenerating the vacant college site is benefiting the entire community.

i For general inquiries about the **One Public Estate programme** and the **Brownfield Land Release Fund**, please email onepublicestate@local.gov.uk, or visit the website to find out more – see www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate



Partners in Care and Health

The Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services are **Partners in Care and Health (PCH)** working with well-respected organisations.

PCH helps councils and NHS partners to improve the way they deliver adult social care and public health services. It also helps Government understand the challenges faced by the sector.

The programme is a trusted network for developing and sharing best practice, developing tools and techniques, providing support and building connections. It is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care and offered to councils without charge.

Come see us at the National Children and Adult Services Conference 2023, 29 November until 1 December, at Stand Number D30 to learn more.



www.local.gov.uk/pch

 [@ptnrscahealth](https://twitter.com/ptnrscahealth)

 www.linkedin.com/showcase/partners-in-care-and-health



Track and compare your local authority's performance across over 10,000 metrics with LG Inform – our free data benchmarking tool.

Our themed reports show you all the latest data on a comprehensive range of topics including:

- homelessness
- children in need and care
- planning
- fly-tipping
- financial hardship.

local.gov.uk/lginform

Reforming smoking and vaping



Professor **Sir Chris Whitty** is the Chief Medical Officer for England

Smoking causes extraordinary damage across the country.

Stillbirths, asthma in children, substantially increased risks of heart attacks, heart failure and stroke, multiple cancers and premature dementia – the costs to society are colossal.

It also drives a substantial proportion of the inequalities between, and within, local authorities, which have shown great leadership in trying to reduce tobacco harms.

More than 80 per cent of smokers began as teenagers. The vast majority of smokers wish they had never started, but are now addicted.

Although the tobacco industry tries to portray this as an issue of choice, the reality is that they market products aiming to addict. Those who are addicted and want to quit have had their choice taken away.

Passive smoking affects a large number of children, pregnant women and others who will be harmed by it – they also do not choose to do so.

Vaping is meant to be a tool to help smokers to quit; that should be its only role. It is not risk free, but is significantly less harmful than smoking (a very low bar). Increasingly, however, companies are marketing vapes to children: this is utterly unacceptable.

Local authorities have been at the forefront of trying to reduce smoking and the damage that arises from it in their communities. They have also been highlighting the harm of vapes to children and the environmental impact of disposable vapes.

Initiatives such as 'Fresh' in North East England, which is jointly funded by 12 local authorities; Greater Manchester's 'Making Smoking History' strategy; and the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire partnership on tobacco are good examples of this.

The Prime Minister recently announced that he will bring forward legislation which,



“More than 80 per cent of smokers began as teenagers. The vast majority wish they had never started”

if approved by Parliament, will steadily raise the age of sale so that anyone turning 14 this year or younger will never be legally sold tobacco products.

This does not remove any rights from existing smokers, and does not criminalise smoking at any time, but will save future generations from the profound damage that comes from addiction to cigarettes at a young age.

This move is supported by the vast majority of the public and was welcomed by opposition parties.

It is also essential that we help current smokers who wish to quit.

The Prime Minister announced a doubling of funding for local authority 'stop smoking' services, and increased funding for anti-smoking campaigns and enforcement, to support stopping smoking.

Legislation will also tackle youth vaping. The Government is consulting on proposals to restrict the flavours and descriptions of vapes, regulate point-of-sale displays, and restrict the sale and supply of disposable vapes, among other techniques that companies are using to market vapes to

children. Local authorities have been at the forefront of highlighting the environmental damage of disposable vapes in addition to the fact they should never be used by children.

If Parliament votes through these changes, it will be a major step forward towards ending the damage of smoking and reducing the marketing of vapes to children.

Ensuring the law works to achieve these goals will, however, lie with local authorities. Supporting smokers to quit and enforcing the law around under-age sales of tobacco products and vapes will both be local authority led.

These are major steps towards reducing harm from tobacco, building on the work and leadership of local authorities over many years.



'Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views' is open for consultation until 6 December, see www.gov.uk/government/consultations

Renters have been let down for too long



Councillor **Nesil Caliskan** is Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

In the first King's Speech in more than 70 years, the Conservatives showed they do not have a plan to fix the fundamental problems facing the country – they are more interested in saving their own skin.

An indefinite delay to ending Section 21 'no-fault' evictions is particularly concerning.

Homelessness is rising and the most common reason for a household being at risk of homelessness is the ending of a private rented tenancy.

Since the Tories first promised the ending of no-fault evictions in April 2019, a total of 71,310 households have faced a no-fault eviction.

Councils are experiencing unprecedented demand for temporary accommodation, spending £1.74 billion supporting 104,000 households in private temporary accommodation while they wait for a permanent home.

Now, despite a national homelessness crisis, the Tories have delayed the implementation of the ban because of backlogs in the court system, with no timescale for addressing the problem.

Labour recognises that renters have been let down for too long already. That is why Deputy Leader and Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities Angela Rayner is promising to deliver an immediate ban, with no caveats, on no-fault evictions within the first days of a Labour government.

Moreover, Labour recognises you cannot fix homelessness without increasing the supply of housing.

Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer is determined to get Britain building again, with 1.5 million new homes built over the next Parliament. Labour will deliver the biggest boost to affordable house building in a generation.

After 13 years of Conservative government and 15 housing ministers, the housing crisis is the worst it has ever been, national finances are in a terrible state, the economy has stagnated, and the cost-of-living crisis continues for families and local authorities.

We desperately need a mission-driven Labour government that can fix our country.

"After 13 years of Conservative government and 15 housing ministers, the housing crisis is the worst it has ever been"



Councillor **Shaun Davies** is Chair of the LGA

Pressure remains on public services

The Chancellor delivered his Autumn Statement on 22 November, setting out plans to support businesses and get more people into work, and to invest in infrastructure and levelling up.

There were some welcome announcements on housing and homelessness – not least, to increase Local Housing Allowance rates, provide another round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, and continue for a third year the monthly £500 'thank you' payments to those incredible people who continue to host new arrivals in their homes under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

It is helpful the Government is continuing to respond in a more joined up way to pressing housing needs across all the schemes that cater for new arrivals to the UK.

Disappointingly, though, there was no additional funding announced for children's services nor adult social



care, despite the financial pressures both are facing.

Spiralling costs in children's social care are a key driver of budget pressures across councils with social care responsibilities.

As we highlighted in our Autumn Statement submission, additional investment in children's services would enable councils to reduce demand and stabilise placements, bringing down pressures and improving outcomes for children.

While the additional funding for adult social care provided in the 2022 Autumn Statement is welcome, it is far from sufficient to resolve the pressures

services face now – not least, from rising demand and costs, and workforce recruitment and retention.

The National Living Wage increases announced in this year's Autumn Statement will help with the latter, but social care providers will likely expect to see their increased wage costs reflected in the fees councils pay.

This will pose a significant additional pressure on adult social care budgets, which are already considered by many directors to be insufficient to meet all statutory duties. The LGA will continue to lobby on your behalf for additional resources.



Councillor **Kevin Bentley** is Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group

Beefing up member peer support

The peer support package offered by the LGA continues to be the cornerstone of the sector support programme for our membership.

From Corporate Peer Challenges to one-to-one mentoring, the LGA Conservative Group is committed to ensuring that our councillors throughout the country can access peer support that provides them with the confidence and skills required to deliver high-quality public services.

As part of the 'Rebuilding the road to victory' strategy published by the LGA Conservative Group in October, changes are now being made to our internal peer recruitment process.

From now on, all prospective Conservative member peers are to be interviewed by the LGA Conservative Group Executive to assess their skills and leadership credentials.

This is part of our new process to ensure that the LGA Conservative Group is sending our best councillors into member authorities.

But we also need to ensure that our existing peers feel supported by the LGA.

"We need to ensure that our existing peers feel supported by the LGA"

For this reason, Cllr Abi Brown, Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, has committed to exploring options to bring forward a formalised peer accreditation process for member peers as part of our efforts to ensure that they are best qualified to undertake peer work – and also so that our member authorities understand that they have been through a rigorous process to become member peers.

If anyone is interested in becoming a member peer, they are welcome to contact me, Cllr William Nunn, our National Lead Peer, or the group office (email lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk).



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

Vulnerable residents deserve better

As ever with previous government announcements, the Autumn Statement from the Chancellor was more about what wasn't in there as much as what was.

For example, there was a deafening silence over social care funding. The system continues to be massively underfunded. Our elderly and vulnerable residents deserve so much better than this.

Social care funding matters in its own right, but also an underfunded care system just puts more pressure on the NHS.

"There was a deafening silence over social care funding: the system continues to be massively underfunded"

There was some helpful news, and I was pleased that the Local Housing Allowance will rise to 30 per cent of local market rents.

I am proud to have campaigned on this issue alongside Liberal Democrat councillors and other colleagues at the LGA.

But this is still a drop in the ocean of what's needed across the country and beyond to address housing costs.

As we approach the festive season, it is a real tragedy to see record numbers of households in temporary accommodation, meaning a serious financial challenge for many councils. We will continue to highlight this problem.

Another key area of concern was over pre-school and early years services. Providers will tell you how upset they were that there was no extra money for the childcare sector; many are concerned that they could go out of business.

I will continue to work with colleagues from the other political groups at the LGA to raise awareness of the real threat to so many local services.



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

Devo deals lack representation

The lack of support for councils in this Government's Autumn Statement will see rising needs unmet and an estimated £4 billion shortfall by 2024.

Devolution deals are heralded as a success by some, but our council leaders are very disappointed at the lack of representation by district councils, independent councillors, and councillors from smaller parties within the new structures.

This takes power away from local areas, making us increasingly centralised. We should not be forced to reorganise and reduce local representation to have the funding and powers we need to deliver effective and inclusive local services and place shaping.

We may well be circumspect about the focus in the Chancellor's speech on foreign investment instead of opportunities for local investment by local people.

For example, we are seeing swathes of solar panels bought by overseas companies on our farmland, generating money for governments and companies overseas and impacting on local land use.

"We need the right green energy solutions in the right places, supported by local people"

What we need are opportunities for local people to invest and generate local income in green energy generation.

I am a strong advocate of the need to move to net zero as quickly as possible, but we need the right green energy solutions in the right places, supported by local people and generating local wealth.

I am honoured to be showcasing your good initiatives at the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2023 (COP28) in Dubai and I look forward to sharing that experience in the next edition of **first**.

A carbon reduction code for buildings



Dr **Petia Tzokova** is an Industry Adoption Facilitator at the Centre for Smart Infrastructure, University of Cambridge

Carbon emissions from the construction of public buildings and infrastructure usually sit outside the scope of local authorities' carbon reduction plans, yet often represent more than half of a council's total emissions.

The Carbon Reduction Code for the Built Environment provides a practical way for local authorities to examine and test their carbon reduction ambitions and make a public commitment to reaching net zero by 2045.

The code is hosted by the University of Cambridge Centre for Smart Infrastructure and Construction, and forms part of the UK Construction Leadership Council's CO₂nstructZero initiative.

The National Association of Construction Frameworks (NACF) is a voluntary membership body of local government officers, working with industry, academia and central government, to drive improvements in quality, efficiency, and sustainability. It is focused on the benefits to the health and wellbeing of our local communities through reducing pollution, the effects of climate change, and by increasing biodiversity.

Recognising that local authorities need a means to report the carbon activities of their contractors, NACF regional members, including Constructing West Midlands (owned by

Birmingham City, Solihull and Sandwell Councils), worked with Cambridge to develop the code.

The Southern Construction Framework (owned by Hampshire and Devon County Councils) and national framework members SCAPE and SCAPE Scotland (owned by six councils in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire and Gateshead) have signed up to the code – and continue to lead the work of the group through the development of a baseline carbon reduction tool.

Signing up to the code demonstrates a clear commitment that requires real data, annual reporting, and quantifiable improvements. Through their ongoing support, NACF members have already encouraged supply chain contractor partners Morgan Sindall, Galliford Try, Kier, Willmott Dixon, McLaughlin & Harvey, Interclass and Mace to sign up.

We have seen real interest in the code from local authorities attending the recent Midlands Net Zero Hub's annual conference, and look forward to seeing further commitments made by other LGA members soon.

i For more information please visit smartinfrastructure.eng.cam.ac.uk/carbon-reduction-code or contact us at carboncode-enquiries@eng.cam.ac.uk



Matt Bazeley OBE is Chief Executive Officer of CSSC

Workforce wellbeing

It goes without saying that the last few years have presented council and local authority staff with real life challenges, while the cost of living continues to bite.

The Civil Service Sports Council (CSSC) – a not-for-profit organisation supported by the Cabinet Office – provides fantastic sports, leisure offers, member benefits and discounts to more than 130,000 members.

Our members come from across the

public sector, including the civil service, local authorities, housing associations, the NHS, health authorities, blue light services, schools and colleges.

I joined CSSC as CEO last year because I believe that sports and recreation have a huge amount to add to the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of us all.

As an organisation rooted in supporting life's true champions, it is more important than ever that our service provides opportunities to save money and enjoy fitness and leisure daily.

We provide our members with the ability to enjoy fitness and leisure activities as well as more than 4,000 ways for them to save money daily.

For example, CSSC members can access discounts and savings to enjoy days out across the UK, including huge savings on local and national gym

memberships, sports centres, zoos and amusement parks.

Some of the other ways that members can save is through our cashback scheme. Every time a member orders or tops up a reloadable gift card or orders a digital voucher for a retailer through the platform, they get a percentage of the value back in their CSSC savings account as cashback.

Members can also offset rising bills by getting up to £90 cashback at leading mobile and broadband suppliers including O2, Plusnet, Virgin Media, Vodafone, EE and BT.

Our members are truly deserving of our support – they are the nation's true champions and the unsung heroes who put the 'Great' in Great Britain.

If we can do more to help them enjoy the benefits of CSSC membership and thereby enjoy longer, happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives with their loved ones, then our job is done.



For more information about **CSSC** or to become a member, please visit www.cssc.co.uk



Emily Cunningham is an ocean conservation expert and co-founder of Motion for the Ocean

Diving into ocean action

In this current climate (pun intended), good environmental news is yet another endangered species.

Bucking that trend are the 19 councils taking action to tackle the interconnected climate and ocean emergencies.

Two years ago, ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26), I co-developed a model Motion for the Ocean with fellow ocean experts Dr Pamela Buchan and Nicola Bridge (see **first** 669).

This was in recognition that the climate emergency cannot be resolved

without ocean recovery: our ocean is essential to climate regulation, absorbing heat and carbon and driving our weather, but it is under more stress than ever before.

The good news is that 19 councils of all tiers, both coastal and inland, have now used our model Motion for the Ocean as a blueprint for meaningful local action to benefit ocean and climate – and the communities that rely on both.

In October 2023, Newark and Sherwood District Council became the first Midlands council to pass our 'inland' Motion for the Ocean, recognising that no matter where we live, we impact and are impacted by our ocean.

Cllr Emma Oldham (Ind), Portfolio Holder for Biodiversity and Environmental Services, proposed the motion that was passed unanimously. It read: "We are proud to join the Motion for the Ocean movement. As an inland council, we may not have direct coastal responsibilities, but we understand the significance and impact that our local actions and policies have on the ocean."

As COP28 commands our attention, I'm thrilled that the ocean's role as our greatest climate ally is finally being



recognised – both internationally and locally. Ocean action is climate action. And both are required for a prosperous future.

The Motion for the Ocean can be the catalyst for turning the tide. No matter where you're located, you can make a difference.



Councillors across the political spectrum have championed the **Motion for the Ocean**. Free support, including more details and the model **Motion for the Ocean** for coastal and inland councils, are available at www.lgacoastalsig.com/motion-for-the-ocean

Waterways at risk



Councillor **Sir Robert Atkins** (Con) is a Trustee of the Inland Waterways Association and a member of Wyre Council

Our canals and rivers are under threat.

That may seem a strange statement when you think of the popularity of television programmes like Timothy West and Prunella Scales' Great Canal Journeys. Or the millions of people who regularly use canals and rivers for exercise, recreation or active travel. Or the jobs, heritage or regeneration they enable.

I have seen at first hand the increasing popularity of our inland waterways as the 250-year old industrial network has been repurposed for leisure.

Millions of hours of volunteer effort have gone into restoring derelict waterways. Today, restoration projects continue around the country, and the waterways are being reimagined again for climate change mitigation.

Inland waterways are widespread. Nationally there are 5,000 navigable miles and almost 80 per cent of local authorities have a navigable waterway or a waterway under restoration.

In 2022, an estimated 8.9 million people took part in an inland boating or watersports activity, resulting in the delivery of £3.1 billion in gross value added to the UK economy in 2022/23 and supporting more than 132,000 jobs.

To this should be added the very

substantial social and environmental value of waterways.

However, the waterways are suffering from inflation, constrained funding and extreme weather events. Failing to maintain the infrastructure has consequences, as in 2019 when 1,500 local residents were evacuated in case the dam at Toddbrook Reservoir above Whaley Bridge in Derbyshire collapsed.

Yet despite the value of the waterways, their deteriorating condition and the minimal level of national investment needed, the Government appears unwilling to invest appropriately.

To address this threat, Fund Britain's Waterways has come together. More than 100 organisations, representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways, are campaigning for national and local government to act now to protect the public benefit and natural capital of our waterways.

Please join and support us at www.fundbritainwaterways.org.uk. Encourage people to sign the public petition and write to their MPs. We need everyone's help to safeguard our waterways for future generations.



Gloucester docks

© CHRIS HOWES/IWA

LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

12-13 March 2024

Delta Hotels by Marriott Bristol City Centre

The Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is a key event in the conference calendar for senior fire officers and members of fire and rescue authorities and provides an opportunity to meet in-person and discuss developments impacting the fire and rescue sector.

We will hear from a range of expert speakers about some of the key issues facing fire and rescue services and consider how we can meet these challenges.

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



LGA Local Government Finance Conference 2024

Tuesday 9 January, London

Our conference will explore what the 2023 Autumn Statement and 2024/25 provisional local government finance settlement mean for councils, the longer term financial outlook for local government and possible solutions to the local audit crisis.

There will be opportunities to engage in discussions with senior politicians and leading finance professionals from the sector.

Confirmed speakers include:

Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair, Local Government Association

Nico Heslop, Director of Local Government Finance,
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Gareth Davies, Comptroller and Auditor General, National
Audit Office

Kate Ogden and **David Phillips**, Institute for Fiscal Studies

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



A mixed picture



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



Following on from their spectacular 2021 gain in the North Shropshire parliamentary by-election, Liberal Democrats in the county are thriving.

In September, they took the Worfield division by eight votes, overturning a 50-point Conservative majority. Liberal Democrat Colin Taylor's more recent by-election victory in Alveley and Claverley saw him win almost two-thirds of votes, as a 47-point Conservative majority was brushed aside.

In Buckinghamshire, the Conservatives easily won all three seats in Buckingham East in 2021, with Liberal Democrats out-pollled by an Independent and Labour candidates. This time round, Liberal Democrat Anja Schaefer, Mayor of Buckingham Town Council, finished 100 votes ahead of her Conservative rival.

A more predictable gain came in the battle for Bolton's Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill ward, newly created before last May's election. The three seats divided between two Conservatives and a Liberal Democrat, who topped the poll. It was odds on, therefore, that Deirdre McGeown, a local parish councillor, would strengthen her party's grip on the ward.

For many years, Elmbridge had been notable for the presence of local Resident Associations on the council. The 2022 elections saw increased support for Liberal Democrats, who gained the most votes, a feat achieved again last May when they became the largest party on the council. Molesey East elected a Liberal Democrat then, and this second win was expected.

The Greens took two Conservative seats in Worcester, one for the city council, another for the county. Warndon Parish South was won in May by the Greens' Andrew Cross and he is now joined by Katie Collier. Cross also successfully contested the larger Warndon Parish county division, and secured almost double the votes cast for his Conservative opponent.

These wins were followed a week later by the successful defence of two seats in Burnley. The borough council ward



returned to Green last May, so defeat there was unlikely, but the county division seat was more difficult.

A resignation in North Somerset meant a vacancy in Wrington ward, near Bristol Airport, which has submitted plans for expansion. The Liberal Democrats had won the seat before 2015, so might have sensed an opportunity, but it was the Greens' Thomas Daw who prevailed, winning by just 39 votes.

Labour's only victory was in Melton's Asfordby ward. It is a puzzle why it ignored this ward in recent years. Margaret Clay, the party's winner, is the first Labour candidate on the ballot since a by-election challenge nine years ago.

There was a Conservative victory in South Holland's Spalding St Paul's ward. The count finished with Vanessa Browning,

standing for the South Holland Independents, tied on 155 votes with Conservative Glynis Scalese. After drawing lots, the returning officer gave victory to the Conservatives.

A second by-election in Bolton provided further evidence of the borough's complex local politics. Fourteen candidates challenged for the three vacancies in Kearsley ward last May. The three winners all stood for 'One Kearsley', with these edging out Tracey Wilkinson, representing the Farnsworth & Kearsley First Party (FKF), and a Reform UK & Bolton for Change candidate.

One Kearsley then disbanded, with two councillors defecting to Labour and the third resigning his seat, causing the by-election. Wilkinson, a former councillor in the area, was easily elected.

Local by-elections

Bolton, Kearsley FKF GAIN FROM ONE KEARSLEY 43.7% over Lab Turnout 17.8%	North Somerset, Wrington GREEN GAIN FROM IND 3.8% over Con Turnout 21.8%
Bolton, Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON 12.7% over Con Turnout 22.7%	Shropshire, Alveley and Claverley LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON 22.6% over Con Turnout 31.6%
Buckinghamshire, Buckingham East LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON 5.6% over Con Turnout 23.1%	South Holland, Spalding St Paul's CON GAIN FROM SH IND 0.0% over SH Ind Turnout 17.5%
Elmbridge, Molesey East LIB DEM GAIN FROM RES 3.5% over Con Turnout 28.1%	Worcestershire, Warndon Parish GREEN GAIN FROM CON 20.0% over Con Turnout 30.1%
Melton, Asfordby LAB GAIN FROM GREEN 8.4% over Con Turnout 16.8%	Worcester, Warndon Parish South GREEN GAIN FROM CON 28.8% over Con Turnout 29.9%

i Only results where there was a change of political control are shown above. For all the results, more analysis, and more data on these and other recent by-election results, please visit www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections

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