



10

## Adult social care

No extra funding for  
frontline services

**15** **Rural economy**  
Pandemic could  
redefine rural and  
coastal communities

**16** **Local leaders**  
Meet the local  
politicians who  
lead the LGA

**18** **Success stories**  
Helping create a  
post-pandemic  
council narrative

**27** **Heritage status**  
Recognition for Wales'  
slate landscapes and  
communities

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# CONTENTS



## Sustainable social care

**T**he Government's plan to increase National Insurance to raise extra funding for health and adult social care is a welcome first step towards the significant reforms that are needed.

However we are deeply concerned that it provided no additional funding for frontline social care services, which is desperately needed, and could potentially raise costs – points we are urgently seeking to address with government (p10).

Elsewhere in the magazine, we continue our previews of the autumn party conferences, with articles from Cllrs Nick Forbes and Izzi Seccombe, respectively the Leaders of the LGA's Labour and Conservative Groups (p12-13).

One of the strengths of the LGA is that it is member-led, and you can find out more about the councillors who decide our strategies and policies as members of our Executive Advisory Board (p16).

You can also read about two LGA-commissioned reports – one on promoting urban growth and recovery, amid concerns that the pandemic could lead to 500,000 job losses in our major cities and towns (p14); and the other on rural and coastal areas, which could benefit from trends such as 'staycations' and home working to the tune of £51 billion a year by 2030 (p15).

**Cllr James Jamieson**  
is LGA Chairman



## FEATURES

- 10 Care costs**  
Do the Government's proposals measure up?
- 12 Labour in Brighton**  
Social care will be a top concern
- 13 Tory conference**  
Building on local election successes
- 14 Urban recovery**  
A new vision for cities and towns
- 15 Rural economy**  
Pandemic trends could stimulate growth
- 16 Member led**  
Meet the LGA's Executive Advisory Board
- 18 Success stories**  
Creating a new corporate narrative
- 20 Housing advisers**  
Bespoke expert support for councils

## COMMENT

- 21 Revitalising rural**  
Rural areas are being left behind
- 24 Community foundations**  
Local champions and natural partners
- 24 Small investments**  
Helping the self-employed recover
- 25 Housing ombudsman**  
Councillors' dual role on complaints
- 26 Leisure and culture**  
Mergers to protect local partners
- 27 Heritage status**  
Lord Wigley on Wales' slate communities
- 28 Canals and rivers**  
The blue choice for green initiatives



## REGULARS

- 04** News
- 09** Parliament – Environment Bill
- 22** Chairman and group leaders
- 30** Councillor – improving digital citizenship
- 31** Local elections



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## £5.4bn for adult social care reforms

**Significant plans for the future of adult social care have been announced by the Government, including the introduction of a new health and social care levy.**

The UK-wide 1.25 per cent levy, based on National Insurance contributions, is expected to raise £36 billion over three years, with £5.4 billion going to adult social care. This will be ringfenced to fund proposals including a cap on personal care costs set at £86,000, effective from October 2023.

People will not have to pay towards the cost of their care if they have less than £20,000 in assets, up from the current threshold of £14,250, while only those with assets of more than £100,000 will be required to pay for the full cost of their own care.

Self-funders will be able to request access to care at council-funded rates, with an expectation that councils will use some of the additional funding to pay care providers a 'fair price for care'.

Investment of £500 million for new measures to support the care workforce, more support for unpaid carers, investment in the Disabled Facilities Grant and supported housing, and plans for a white paper on wider reforms were also announced.

The LGA said the proposals were an

important first step in changing the way social care is funded and that the promise of a new adult social care white paper is positive, but that further clarity is needed on a range of issues

LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said: "Greater information is needed on what proportion of the new levy will come to social care, including when and how the funding will be distributed.

"The Spending Review must also set out how immediate and short-term pressures will be addressed, along with funding to improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of care and support, without relying on measures such as the adult social care council tax precept, which raises varying amounts in different parts of the country and is not related to need."

● See p10-11, p23



## Booster jabs to counter winter infections

The Government has published its autumn and winter COVID-19 plan to help mitigate the potential risks of rising infection and hospitalisation rates over the coming months.

Single vaccines will be offered to children aged 12-15 and booster jabs will be offered to about 30 million people, including the over-50s, younger adults with health conditions, and frontline health and social care workers.

Where infection rates remain stable, the Government's 'plan A' also includes continuing the work of NHS Test and Trace and offering

free PCR tests; encouraging free flu vaccine take-up (extended to over-50s and secondary school pupils); and reminding people to let in fresh air if meeting indoors and to wear face coverings in crowded settings.

If the NHS comes under more pressure this winter, 'plan B' could involve the mandating of face masks in some public places, testing and vaccine certification for certain events, and the issuing of guidance on working from home.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "COVID-19 remains

a serious public health threat and protecting our older and most vulnerable people is councils' number one priority, especially as we head into what will be a challenging autumn and winter.

"This plan could help see us through this difficult period, with contingency measures in place to help prevent the NHS from coming under unsustainable pressure.

"It will be vital that directors of public health, working in councils, should also have all the support and tools they need to respond to any local outbreaks."



# Afghan resettlement funding announced

**The Government has announced the funding councils will receive for resettling Afghan citizens in the UK and asked for more local authorities to “step up” and offer places.**

The LGA said the majority of councils are helping, and has been highlighting some of the challenges they face as new arrivals move from hotel quarantine to temporary ‘bridging’ accommodation.

These include lack of information about the people arriving, what their needs are and their family size, and providing basic necessities as well as wellbeing and psychological support for those who have been traumatised.

Councils in many areas have moved quickly to support refugees in ‘bridging’ hotels and the LGA is calling for that role to be recognised and properly funded.

Giving evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said it was important to reduce the time Afghan families spend in ‘bridging’

hotels, particularly due to the lack of play opportunities for children and wider concerns around safeguarding.

However, with Afghan families often having six or seven members and large houses generally in short supply across the country, the Government will need to properly resource councils across all the schemes that resettle new arrivals in new communities.

“If there is going to be genuine dispersal across the country, the fact of the matter is renting a four-bedroom house in Surrey, for instance, is going to cost an awful lot more than renting a four-bedroom house in, say, Barnsley,” Cllr Jamieson told MPs.

Councils who support people through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy will receive £20,520 per person for resettlement and integration costs over three years, while the Afghan Housing Costs Fund has increased from £5 million to £17 million, see <https://bit.ly/3EpMJZW>

## ‘Tax landlords to pay for social care’

Extra funding for social care could have been raised through taxing landlords, Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer MP has said.

Speaking at the LGA Labour Leaders’ Summit, he said the Government’s plans to raise National Insurance on employees and employers to pay for the NHS backlog and social care were “unfair” and “poorly thought through”.

Instead, the money could have been raised by taxing the incomes of landlords, and those who buy and sell large quantities of financial assets, stocks and shares.

Under the Government’s plans, there will be a 1.25 percentage point rise in National Insurance from next April for workers and employers, meaning that someone earning £30,000 will pay an extra £255 a year, while

someone on a £50,000 salary will pay £505.

Sir Keir said: “Working people will pay more tax now, but might still have to sell their home to pay even more later.”

The Government’s plans would leave “a private landlord, renting out multiple properties, not paying a penny more in tax, and their hard-working tenants to pick up the burden”.

Sir Keir warned that the plans would not provide any money for councils in the short term and would force them to put up council tax to meet demand.

Labour would instead

introduce a principle of “home first” care, shifting the focus to prevention and early intervention, and introduce a “new deal” for care workers, he said.



## In brief Cabinet reshuffle

Michael Gove MP has replaced Robert Jenrick MP as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in a cabinet reshuffle that also saw Nadhim Zahawi MP promoted from vaccines minister to Education Secretary. LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said: “This has been an incredibly difficult period for councils and communities and we thank Robert Jenrick for the support he has given to local government during the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis has shown what can be achieved when government empowers councils to innovate and create new services locally. We look forward to working with Michael Gove to ensure councils are backed with the resources and freedoms they need to build back local from the pandemic, level up communities and deliver more for our residents and communities.”

● See p13, p22

## Care staff crisis

More than two-thirds of care workers (68 per cent) say their mental health has declined during the pandemic, according to a survey by the trade union UNISON. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said: “Councils and care providers are doing what they can to support their workers, including tailoring information to address specific concerns about the coronavirus vaccine. Other actions are also urgently needed for the care workforce – which still faces a huge recruitment and retention crisis and extremely high turnover rates – including on pay, conditions, professionalisation, skills and training.”

## Tourism report

An Independent Review of Destination Management Organisations in England by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has recognised the importance of local authorities to tourism, both as leaders of place and as direct deliverers of tourist attractions. Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA’s Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: “The substantial amount of work and evidence poured into the report has resulted in a strong set of recommendations that, if supported by central government, will play a pivotal role in sustaining and developing tourism in these areas.”

## Head teachers raise SEND funding concerns

Funding for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is insufficient, according to 97 per cent of school leaders surveyed by the National Association of Head Teachers.

Similar numbers (95 per cent) reported that top-up funding for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans was insufficient.

The survey also found that almost a third (31 per cent) reported making cuts to balance their budget in 2020/21, rising to 35 per cent who expect they will be forced to make cuts this academic year.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The long-term funding of schools has become more vital after they have incurred considerable additional costs due to COVID-19, the impacts of which will be with children and young people for years to come.

"It is vital that children are put at the centre of our recovery and councils and schools want to work with government towards our shared goal of ensuring pupils make up for lost learning and are able to provide holistic support, including for pupils with SEND.

"The Government should urgently complete its ongoing review of the SEND system and set out reforms that increase mainstream inclusion, provide councils and schools with long-term certainty of funding to meet the needs of all children with SEND, and give councils the power to hold education and health partners to account if their provision for identifying and supporting children with SEND is not adequate.

"We are also calling for high needs block deficits to be written off."



# Leisure services 'key to nation's health'

**Investment in public sport and leisure services is key to levelling up the health of the nation, tackling health inequalities and supporting climate change targets, according to a new report supported by the LGA.**

'Securing the future of public sport and leisure services', published with the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), evaluates the current state of the sector and sets out recommendations to ensure its survival.

Councils are the biggest investor in sport, leisure, parks and green spaces, spending £1.1 billion a year in England and providing lifelong opportunities for all to be active.

However, the pandemic has hit the sector hard, compounding existing challenges, including a lack of strategic coordination between health and leisure at a national level.

The report recommends that the new Office for Health Improvement and

Disparities ensures the contribution of public leisure services to the nation's wellbeing is communicated to health partners and included in strategies to promote good health.

The LGA is calling for the Spending Review to include £1 billion in capital investment to bring the leisure estate up to modern design and environmental standards. Ageing public sport and leisure facilities account for up to 40 per cent of a council's carbon emissions, hampering efforts to meet net zero targets.

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: "These facilities and services are a part of the social infrastructure of the nation.

"With the right investment and government support, councils can do far more to maximise the benefits of sport and leisure services and build on their existing work to level up their communities, from improving health, to reducing emissions and driving regeneration."



## Taking advantage of international trade

The LGA has published guidance to help councils support their local businesses to take advantage of new and emerging export opportunities across the globe.

'Councils' role in supporting the exports industry', commissioned by the LGA with support from the Department for International Trade, found that nearly 6.5 million UK jobs are reliant on exports, particularly in London and the South East.

Councils have an important role to play in supporting a greater volume of exports from small and medium sized enterprises, with many businesses looking to them for advice around arrangements for exporting goods and services and the regulatory framework.

For example, in Sunderland, the city council developed strong economic ties with its twin cities and promoted inward investment with major local employers in Japan and the USA.

And Kent County Council was one of a number of organisations that set up Kent International Business, a group that works with local businesses to identify international trade options and coordinate local export services.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chair of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "This guide will help local authorities to build connections and work with partners domestically and internationally to help support greater exports and create jobs in their local communities.

"Councils stand ready to work with the Government as an important partner to build back better and level up the country, including supporting local businesses to increase exports."

● See [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications) for the report

# £7bn fund to tackle city job losses

Half a million jobs in town and city centres are at risk because of the impact of the pandemic, as people continue to work from home, according to exclusive analysis commissioned by the LGA.

The report found the hospitality, manufacturing, finance, and retail sectors were more at risk from changes to the economy, and that young people aged 16-24 were 2.5 times more likely than others to be working in a sector that was shut down by COVID-19.

To address these issues, the report recommends creating a new 10-year 'Sustainable Urban Futures Fund' worth up to £7 billion to support local leaders to invest in infrastructure improvements, new housing projects, local town centres and other measures to support economic growth.

This could incorporate existing government funds, such as the Towns Fund.

Mayor Marvin Rees, Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board, said: "Councils are at the

forefront of efforts to lead the recovery from the pandemic, which includes delivering economic growth that is sustainable and benefits all.

"We want to work closely with the Government to help deliver on its levelling up commitment and deliver local investment across all parts of the country. The need for the Government to work with urban leaders cannot be ignored, as this report sets out the stark consequences urban economies face during this recovery phase.

"Although recent funding announcements to invest in local areas by the Government have been important, these funds are sometimes fragmented and complex. A Sustainable Urban Futures Fund could provide long-term, large-scale funding for integrated urban recovery programmes that respond to the challenges of the pandemic and the opportunities of the future."

● See p14 for more on this story

# Pandemic 'could boost' rural and coastal areas

**A rise in people 'staycating', population movement away from urban areas and a greater focus on the green economy could all help deliver a £51 billion a year economic boost to rural areas.**

A report commissioned by the LGA says these pandemic-related trends could help to 'redefine' rural and coastal communities in England.

However, it warns that disproportionately low wages in coastal and rural communities is making the cost of housing increasingly unaffordable for local workers.

The LGA is calling on the Government to improve digital connectivity, extend the public transport network to ensure more young people can access employment and training, and work to mitigate the impact of seasonal tourism on local housing costs.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "Rural and coastal communities are places which have unique challenges from low income, seasonal working and poor connectivity but also significant opportunities which can be



utilised as we recover from the pandemic.

"With a rise in homeworking, an unprecedented increase in 'staycating' and greater appreciation for natural resources, there are significant changes taking place in the local economies of rural and coastal parts of the country.

"If the many people who want to make these changes permanent are supported to do so, and the appropriate investment is made in rural and coastal communities to leverage the associated economic opportunities, there is the potential for a substantial levelling up of rural areas' prosperity."

● See p15 for more on this story

## In brief Spending review

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has launched a three-year Spending Review concluding on 27 October, when the Autumn Budget will be announced. The review will set UK government departments' resource and capital budgets, and the devolved administrations' block grants, for 2022/23 to 2024/25. The deadline for submissions is 30 September. The LGA is finalising its submission and will be making the case for councils to have the power and resources to 'build back local' and deliver more for residents and communities (see [www.local.gov.uk/build-back-local](http://www.local.gov.uk/build-back-local)). If you are willing to share your council's submission, please email [lgfinance@local.gov.uk](mailto:lgfinance@local.gov.uk).

## Consultation on jobs

A six-week consultation has been launched by the Government on whether it should be compulsory for frontline NHS and social care workers in England who are in contact with patients and people receiving care to be vaccinated against COVID-19. If the proposals go ahead, it will mean only those who are fully vaccinated, unless medically exempt, could be deployed to deliver health and care services. The Government has already said all staff in registered care homes in England must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by 11 November, unless exempt. The consultation closes on 22 October.

● See [www.gov.uk/government/consultations](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations)

## Young lives

Former Children's Commissioner Anne Longfield has launched a Young Lives Commission that aims to help prevent vulnerable young people from becoming involved in serious violence, gangs and the justice system. The LGA supports the new commission and has called for the Government to make its £500 million Youth Investment Fund available as soon as possible. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, added: "Council-run youth services have a vital role to play in helping young people avoid being drawn into harmful and dangerous situations. However, they have seen funding reduced by more than two-thirds in real terms since 2010, which means limited funding for prevention work is being diverted into services to protect children who are at immediate risk of harm."

## In brief

### Health inequalities

A new national body tackling health inequalities will officially launch on 1 October. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) will be co-led by newly appointed Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy, currently President of the Association of Directors of Public Health and Director of Public Health at Tameside Council. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "The new OHID and the change of its formal title [from Office for Health Promotion] is a better reflection of the need to address the underlying health inequalities that existed long before COVID-19 and have been exacerbated by it. All parts of the public health system – including councils' public health services – have a role to play in promoting healthier choices, preventing sickness and intervening early."

### Homelessness falls

There were 119,400 households owed a homelessness prevention duty in England during 2020/21 – a 20 per cent drop on the previous year, according to the latest official figures. Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "While these figures reflect the emergency measures brought in following the COVID-19 outbreak, we are concerned that, as life returns to normal, there could be an increase in homelessness cases. We want to work with government on a cross-departmental, long-term homelessness prevention strategy and tackle our housing shortage as we recover from the pandemic."

### Council audit

Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) is inviting councils to opt into the national scheme for local auditor appointments from 2023 to 2028 – see [www.psa.co.uk](http://www.psa.co.uk). The decision to opt into the national scheme must be made by full council, and councils have until 11 March to formally notify PSAA of their acceptance of the opt-in invitation. The LGA supports the sector-led national audit appointing scheme and believes it remains the best option for councils. Meanwhile, audit committee chairs and S151 officers can find out more about the PSAA's work and the 2023 appointing period via a series of free webinars, see [www.psa.co.uk/autumn-and-winter-seminars](http://www.psa.co.uk/autumn-and-winter-seminars).



## Sector support for rough sleepers

Long-term funding, improved access to social housing and clarity of guidance for rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds are among the improvements councils want to see to support for rough sleepers.

The findings are in 'Voice of the sector: supporting rough sleepers at a time of national crisis', a new LGA report sharing learning and good practice from the Everyone In initiative.

When the pandemic hit, councils were required to act urgently and rapidly to help rough sleepers off the streets and into safe and suitable accommodation, to protect them from the spread of COVID-19.

Following the success of Everyone In, which saw more than 37,000 vulnerable people supported, the LGA worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to facilitate a peer support process as part of its government-funded sector support programme.

This enabled lead council officers to reflect on their work and share learning

through a programme of 'delivery and impact panels'. The LGA facilitated 28 panels, involving 222 councils, between last December and February.

The report outlines the major issues, themes and learning from these panel sessions, capturing the voice of the sector as it carried out a crucial role at a time of national crisis.

Among the key themes to emerge were the commitment and dedication of frontline staff, opportunities for innovation, reframing relationships with partners, strengthened approaches to data sharing, and a welcoming of the national focus and funding from government.

Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "We have sought to build on the experiences of councils in responding to the crisis by sharing learning, knowledge and expertise so we can continue to work together to tackle rough sleeping."

● See [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications) for the full report

## Rural infrastructure concerns over barn conversions

**Councils are warning that rural communities risk missing out on vital local services because of a surge of almost 225 per cent in homes converted from barns and farm buildings in the past five years.**

Latest figures show 734 homes in England were created by agricultural to residential conversions in 2019/20 under permitted development rights – where full planning permission is not required – compared with 226 in 2015/16.

Under these planning laws, developers are not required to contribute towards local infrastructure, such as roads, schools and GP surgeries, nor do they have to provide any affordable housing.

The LGA says it is concerned that rural areas could be missing out on these essential local services and is calling on government to

revoke the nationally prescribed permitted development right.

Devon saw the highest number of agricultural buildings turned into homes in 2019/20, with 127 conversions, followed by Dorset (73), Kent (68), Northamptonshire (33) and Essex (30).

Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson said: "It is a growing concern that we are seeing more and more barns and farm buildings in rural areas turned into homes without planning permission.

"Residents in any area need to have the support of strong infrastructure in place, whether that is schools, surgeries or adequate road networks. If developers are not obliged to provide any of these, then there is a real risk some communities could miss out on these vital services."

● See p15, p21.

## Tackling the climate emergency

The LGA has been raising councils' environmental concerns with MPs and Peers



**A legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic must be that we, as a nation, grasp the opportunity to protect and enhance our natural environment, and tackle the climate emergency.**

It is vital that we continue to improve air quality, protect against flooding, and ensure our transport, waste and energy policies are environmentally sustainable.

Local government is already prioritising environmental goals, including leading the way towards achieving net zero carbon, increasingly with ambitious plans to achieve this before the Government's 2050 target.

The LGA is supporting councils to deliver on their ambitions for the environment through its sector support work, such as the climate change improvement and support programme.

We are also supporting councils' work

in this area by seeking to influence key legislation and committee inquiries.

For example, the LGA briefed Peers ahead of the Environment Bill's report stage in the House of Lords in September and several of our proposed amendments were tabled by Peers. These aim to increase local authority access to biodiversity credits and grant local authorities powers to serve biodiversity contravention orders.

We also stated our intention to work with the Government on the development of guidance to planning authorities on how they must consider local nature recovery strategies.

The LGA has also given evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee, as part of its inquiry into mapping the path to net zero.

Clr Rachel Blake, speaking on behalf

of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board, talked about the LGA's proposal to introduce a national framework and climate task force to tackle the climate emergency.

She explained that responsibility for net zero is dispersed across government departments, adding that a framework was needed to clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure councils are properly resourced to deliver on national commitments.

Throughout the session, Clr Blake emphasised that the role of councils will be critical in achieving net zero and that they stand ready to work in partnership with Government.

We also briefed MPs ahead of a House of Commons' debate on reducing plastic waste.

The debate focused on the environmental impact of plastic pollution, how we can ensure that more plastic waste is recycled, and what steps should be taken to reduce the amount of plastic waste being produced.

Briefing parliamentarians, we made the case that councils and households are working together to increase recycling rates, with plastic packaging collected by councils doubling over the past decade, and councils ready to take on the challenge of improving recycling rates further.

Tulip Siddiq MP (Lab, Hampstead and Kilburn) highlighted the financial pressures on councils and the need for adequate resources to be given to local authorities to allow them to deal with plastic waste effectively.

In her contribution, Theresa Villiers MP (Con, Chipping Barnet) agreed with the LGA's view that the proceeds of 'extended producer responsibility' for waste should be used to help councils with waste management.

This last point brings us back full circle to the Environment Bill, and its welcome commitment for retailers and manufacturers to pay for recycling and disposing of packaging and household waste (extended producer responsibility). This is a crucial stage in shifting the cost away from the taxpayer and back to the polluter.

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



Councillor James  
Jamieson is Chairman  
of the LGA

# Reforming adult social care

**A**dult social care and support is a vital public service that helps people of all ages, with different needs and in different settings, to live the life they want to lead.

It helps support people's independence, wellbeing, relationships and contribution to their local community. In this way, it helps strengthen the places in which we live, our economy and the capacity of other local services.

Funding and reform are needed to bolster social care's potential to best support people and communities, and in September the Government published its plan to strengthen the NHS and social care as we move forward and recover from the pandemic.

'Build back better: our plan for health and social care' sets out a number of initiatives, including a cap on care costs, to be funded through a new 1.25 per cent health and social care levy based on National Insurance (NI) contributions.

We recognise that protecting people from 'catastrophic care costs' and having to sell their home to pay for care is a government commitment. This is a potentially important first step in changing the way social care is paid for and funded, which we

acknowledge is an important issue.

It is also helpful that the Government has looked beyond just this issue, outlining action on, for example, the workforce and supported housing. The Government has also committed to publishing a new adult social care white paper by the end of the year.

While these are all potentially positive developments, we have serious concerns and question whether they make the kind of progress needed to help adult social care deliver for people, especially given the announcement provided no extra funding for frontline social care.

For example, we question the adequacy of the levy to fund all of the plan's adult social care commitments and need to know what proportion of it will reach adult social care beyond the three-year period covered in the plan.

The levy is expected to raise around £36 billion, with £5.4 billion going to adult social care over the next three years. This is expected to fund:

- an £86,000 cap on maximum care costs that people are required to pay themselves
- an increase in financial means test thresholds, so those with assets of less than £20,000 pay nothing, with a sliding scale of contributions up to assets of £100,000



- funding to enable councils to pay providers a 'fair cost of care' and to help tackle the problem of self-funders paying more for their care than people funded at the council rate
- £500 million for new measures to support the care workforce
- action to ensure unpaid carers

Proposals must be backed up by new **additional funding**

- have the support, advice and respite they need
  - investment in the Disabled Facilities Grant and supported housing
  - improved information for people who draw on social care and support.
- However, there is nothing concrete about the profile of the £5.4 billion over the three-year period. While the NHS will receive funding to tackle its immediate

## Forget what you think you know...

The LGA's September podcast episode on social care explores the new proposed reforms from government and what this means for councils. We hear perspectives from experts in the sector, and from those with lived experience on what matters to them. See [www.local.gov.uk/podcast](http://www.local.gov.uk/podcast)



and longer-term issues, there appears to be no similar funding for the pressing issues facing social care now. Indeed, one reading is that there will be nothing for adult social care until April 2023.

We are left to infer that after three years, the levy allocations will divert from the NHS to social care but the Government needs to clarify this and guarantee they will get through to the sector. We also need a breakdown of social care's allocation for the coming three years, and an explanation for why none of the funding is targeted at addressing significant current pressures.

Other than the £500 million earmarked for measures to support the care workforce, none of the initiatives funded by the levy are itemised. This is unhelpful and makes it difficult to have any confidence in the adequacy of the \$5.4 billion.

It is helpful that the plan makes clear that public sector employers will be compensated for their increases in higher NI contributions so as to avoid a reduction in their spending power.

However, councils routinely commission from a range of private, independent and voluntary sector partners, all of whom will likely want or expect an increase in their fees to reflect their higher NI contributions. The plan says nothing about these potential associated costs, which our initial analysis suggests could cost £100 million a year – just for adult social care.

Meanwhile, it is deeply troubling that the Government's solution for addressing the inflationary and demographic pressures on social care appears to be the use of council tax, social care precept and long-term efficiencies. This is wholly unrealistic.

A continuing reliance on these measures will further destabilise social care and other vital council services,

many of which contribute to people's wider wellbeing.

As we have repeatedly said, council tax (and therefore the social care precept) raises different amounts in different parts of the country and has no relationship to need; councils with higher levels of deprivation tend to have a lower potential amount to raise.

It also has the potential to create confusion and frustration among the public: people are being told that the new levy will fund adult social care but may see potentially significant increases in their local taxes to fund the very same service.

Rather than create a simpler system of funding, the plan risks entrenching the complexity of funding that has beset social care for so long.

Finally, the Government must honour its commitment to publishing a white paper by the end of the year and it must be informed by, and reflect, the considerable body of work that partners across social care have done in recent years – not least the LGA's own 2018 green paper and subsequent publications.

It must also draw the right links to other relevant services, particularly public health which the plan makes no meaningful reference to. You cannot fix the health system without also fixing social care. We need long-term sustainable funding and proposals for reform must be backed up by new additional funding.

The Government's plan for adult social care is extremely light on detail. Over the coming weeks we will be seeking to fill this void through ongoing discussions with ministers and officials.

There are also many links to be made with the upcoming Spending Review and we will be raising the issues and concerns set out above in all of our work on this agenda.

We recognise that councils will have their own concerns and questions and we want to ensure that our work best reflects those. Therefore, if there are points you wish to raise with us, please contact your council's regional principal adviser (see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers)) or email us at [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)



**This article is based on the LGA's briefing on the Government's 'Build back better: our plan for health and social care'. To read it in full, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)**

# Listening to local government

## Social care will be a top concern of councillors at Labour's party conference



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

**A**t the end of September, the Labour Party will gather for its annual conference for the first time in two years. It will meet in Brighton for what will be Sir Keir Starmer's first in-person conference speech since he became Labour Party Leader almost 18 months ago.

I know that all Labour Party members, as well as those attending in a work capacity, are going to be keen to hear what Keir will say in his speech to conference, as well as hearing from members of the shadow cabinet, including our Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves, who will speak on the Monday.

I am confident that, when we meet in Brighton, the Labour Party will share a positive vision for our country in which people are not only properly supported, but also have the tools and opportunities to succeed.

Since Keir became Leader, I have been attending shadow cabinet, bringing the voice of local government to the discussions.

I am encouraged by the commitment that Keir and his shadow cabinet have shown to local government. They are involving groups of Labour councillors in discussions about policy and campaigning, and holding regular meetings and roundtables about policy issues that not only affect local government, but in which our Labour councillors have a high level of expertise.

The past few weeks have been dominated by the Government's announcement on adult social care. After waiting for more than two years, the new policy on social care has raised more questions in local government.

Only £5.4 billion of the money raised will go to social care in the three-year period starting in the 2022/23 financial year, with the raising of the lifetime cap not coming into place until later in 2023.

There has been little mention of wider local government finance in the

announcement, and little mention – apart from the promise of more announcements and papers – about the social care workforce and the long-term sustainability of the social care market.

Just as social care has dominated the discussion in local government and national politics over the past few weeks, I expect that it will be high on the agenda at the party conferences this year.

Labour will be keen to set out their proposals for social care, both to offer an alternative to the Government, but also to pitch their vision and values to the electorate ahead of the next General Election.

I know at the events that we have planned at Labour Party conference – which include the LGA Labour Group's Rally for Local Government – and at the LGA's fringe debate, social care will be raised as a top concern by Labour councillors.

*Labour will be keen to pitch their vision and values to the electorate*

**i** **The Labour Party Conference takes place in Brighton from 25-29 September**, see [www.labour.org.uk/conference/annual-conference-2021](http://www.labour.org.uk/conference/annual-conference-2021). **The LGA's Labour Group is holding a debate at conference on 'Build back local: how do we harness the power of local government to level up across the country', from 1pm to 2.30pm on 27 September. The Association of Labour Councillors' evening reception takes place from 8pm on 26 September, at the Grand Hotel, Brighton. For more information about the LGA's work at the party conferences, visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2021](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2021)**



# Harnessing the power of local government

Conservative councillors are in good spirits after recent local election successes



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

I am writing this preview of the Conservative Party Conference on the same day as the Government reshuffle that saw us bid farewell to Robert Jenrick MP as our Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and welcome Michael Gove MP to the role.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Robert for all that he has done over the past two years, especially in relation to the support – both financial and practical – that was provided to councils throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

On a personal note, I would also like to thank Robert for his regular engagement and dialogue with me and other senior Conservative councillors at the LGA, as well as his attendance at various LGA events, including our 'virtual' annual conferences this year and last, and I wish him all the very best for the future.

Michael Gove is of course an

immensely experienced Cabinet member who has held a range of different portfolios throughout his political career. I look forward to working closely with him on housing, planning, levelling up, devolution, local government finance, climate change and the many other issues that affect our local communities.

Regarding other MHCLG changes that I am aware of at the time of writing, I would also like to thank Luke Hall for all his work during his time as a minister and welcome Kemi Badenoch as the new Minister of State and Neil O'Brien as the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.

Turning to party conference, Conservative councillors will arrive in Manchester in good spirits following the excellent local government election results in May that saw us make significant net gains of councillors and councils and consolidate our position as the largest group here at the LGA.

As usual, we will be holding a fringe event at the conference. This year it will be in the form of a debate entitled 'Build back local: how do we harness the power of local government to level-up across the country?', which will take

place on 3 October from 6pm to 7.30pm in Exchange 6 and 7 of the Manchester Central conference centre.

Following our General Election and local election gains in 'red wall' areas, this is a particularly relevant topic and I am looking forward to speaking at this event alongside our LGA Chairman, Cllr James Jamieson, our LGA President, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, and Jonathan Werran, the Chief Executive of Localis.

The following day, James and I will host the LGA Conservative Group Reception between 6pm and 7.30pm in the Petersfield Suite of the Midland Hotel.

Both of these events are open to all Conservative councillors and I look forward to seeing many of you at them.

In addition to these events, Conservative members of the LGA's policy boards and I will also be speaking at a large number of fringe meetings and discussions organised by external organisations throughout the conference. Further information about these events will be circulated prior to the conference.

After last year's virtual conference, I am really looking forward to catching up with colleagues from across the country, many of whom I will not have seen in person for nearly two years, so please do come and say hello to me and the LGA Conservative Group member and officer team in Manchester.

**i** The Conservative Party Conference takes place in Manchester from 3-6 October, see [www.conservatives.com/conference](http://www.conservatives.com/conference). For more about LGA events at the party conferences, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2021](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2021)



# Urban growth and recovery

The LGA has set out a new vision for urban areas

**T**he coronavirus crisis has amplified existing challenges and created new ones in our major cities and towns, according to research commissioned by the LGA from Cambridge Econometrics Ltd.

In 2020, one in 20 urban residents tested positive (compared to one in 30 elsewhere), and there were 80,700 COVID-19-related deaths – 66 per cent of the national total.

Urban areas have higher risk factors for COVID-19, including lower health and a higher rate of pre-existing medical conditions, more at-risk jobs, higher public transport use, housing overcrowding, and larger black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) populations.

Meanwhile, the renewal of our urban areas remains a work in progress and some remain significantly vulnerable to further economic changes, says the Cambridge Econometrics report.

**i** **'A vision for urban growth and recovery' was commissioned by the LGA's City Regions Board from Cambridge Econometrics Ltd** and is based on research conducted between November 2020 and January 2021. It draws on evidence, forecasts and interviews with urban councils to analyse the impacts of COVID-19, current economic challenges and opportunities. You can read it in full at [www.local.gov.uk/publications/vision-urban-growth-and-recovery](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/vision-urban-growth-and-recovery)

Problems include poor productivity growth, poor earnings growth, inequalities, and housing need, as well as the challenges of climate change, accelerating digital transformation of the workplace, and the contraction in physical retail.

Urban areas will also have to deal with the recession and economic restructuring that will result from COVID-19 and the transition to new trade and customs arrangements now the UK has left the EU.

All of these changes will have different spatial impacts – between cities, and within urban areas – and will also increase inequalities.

The report sets out five main priorities facing urban economies in England and Wales: restructuring, functioning places; inequalities; environmental sustainability and climate change; and resources.

On restructuring, Cambridge Econometrics forecasts a loss of half a million jobs in urban areas between 2019 and 2021 because of COVID-19 and Brexit, with manufacturing, finance and insurance, hospitalities and leisure, retail and other services particularly affected.

In respect of places, an estimated 25 to 30 per cent of retail floorspace is surplus to market requirements (15,000 stores closed in 2020), while house prices and affordability in urban areas continue to be a challenge.

Inequalities were high in urban areas before COVID-19 – 3.4 million households were in poverty in 2019, and BAME residents were twice as likely to be in poverty or unemployed – and these have worsened and deepened during the pandemic.

And while many councils wish to pursue comprehensive carbon reduction

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*✧ The renewal of our urban areas remains a work in progress ✧*

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policies and actions, urban areas are major sources of carbon emissions – presenting challenges ahead in terms of addressing climate change.

Finally, while urban councils have the agility, integrated solutions, and democratic legitimacy to lead recovery, they need the resources to do this effectively.

COVID-19 placed exceptional financial pressure on the whole public sector, impacting on local service delivery. The Government has provided significant financial support to meet these pressures, but they are likely to persist into the medium term, reducing the ability of urban councils to stimulate economic recovery, address

## Growing the rural economy

inequalities and tackle climate change.

Meanwhile, there has been a proliferation of uncoordinated national strategies, funding pots and delivery initiatives – in contrast to the integrated local plans that most of our urban areas have put in place to tackle these issues.

What is needed is an integrated programme of urban recovery and growth that encourages local government, national government, the private sector and communities to work in partnership. Our vision is for a programme that delivers:

- successful economic restructuring that mitigates against the worst impacts of structural unemployment and job loss
- successful and relevant urban centres that meet the current and future needs of residents, businesses and workers
- a step-change improvement in equalities that ensures communities benefit
- sustainable solutions that make significant progress towards carbon emissions reductions
- the agility and capacity to respond to further challenges and opportunities as they emerge.

This would be underpinned by a \$7 billion, 10-year ‘Sustainable Urban Futures Fund’, providing long-term, large-scale funding for integrated, place-based urban recovery programmes.

Scaleable to each locality, the fund would provide a single pot for use on the priorities facing a particular urban area – whether the economy, inclusion, sustainability, housing or infrastructure.

It could incorporate funds and priorities set out in the Build Back Better plan for growth, and other government initiatives such as the Future High Streets Fund, Towns Fund, and Levelling Up Fund.

An integrated, large-scale fund would also attract much higher levels of public and private match funding, with the potential to increase the overall spend to \$31.9 billion in England and Wales’s urban areas over the next 10 years.

This would make a serious impact on economic growth and recovery.

Urban areas and partnerships have a track record of value-added growth and generating jobs – contributing 80 per cent of new growth and three out of four new jobs between 2011 and 2019.

They can provide the strategic and integrated solutions to economic recovery, growth, inclusion and sustainability that the UK needs, and must be a central part of any national strategy for recovery.

**M**any residents of English rural and coastal communities benefit from a high quality of life, the characteristics of which cannot be obtained in the cities and suburbs.

However, life in the countryside or on the coast has its own, often distinct challenges, according to an LGA-commissioned report produced by Pragmatix Advisory.

Some of these are visible in official statistics: more poor-quality housing; higher suicide rates; more drug-related deaths on the coast; weaker rates of educational attainment; an ageing population; and a \$102 billion productivity gap.

The geographical characteristics of rural and coastal locations – such as low population densities, sparsity, remoteness and peripherality – also present social and economic challenges.

Their often small labour and product market catchment areas influence the costs, scale and nature of economic activity that can be competitively undertaken.

Rural and coastal locations have a disproportionate share of small businesses – and only certain industries thrive, with farming, fishing and agri-food, manufacturing (especially food and drink), and tourism over-represented.

Lower rates of unemployment may mask a paucity of full-time, full-year secure jobs. With a quarter of rural workers not earning the living wage, affordability of local housing is an issue for local workers.

However, the pandemic has stimulated new ways of thinking,

and accelerated behaviour changes in consumers and businesses alike. Three trends have the potential to redefine the economic value of rural and coastal locations.

The rise of ‘staycations’ has reminded older audiences of, and introduced new audiences to, what the domestic tourism and leisure sectors have to offer.

Lockdown has also allowed many to revisit how and where to carry out ‘office’ work, while ‘green values’ reinforce the importance of England’s natural assets and a local food chain.

If these trends are nurtured, and the appropriate investment is made in rural and coastal communities to leverage the associated economic opportunities, there is the potential for a substantial levelling up of rural areas’ prosperity.

These three trends could plausibly contribute \$51 billion a year to the rural economy by 2030, representing growth of more than 10 per cent on the gross value contributed by the rural economy today.

In this context, rural and coastal policy should not be seen purely through the lens of redistribution to reduce inequalities and deprivation. Instead, much the same as urban policy, it should be viewed in terms of investment to deliver sustainable returns to the national economy.

### **i** ‘Rural recognition, recovery, resilience and revitalisation’

and its recommendations to government can be read in full at [www.local.gov.uk/rural-recognition-recovery-resilience-and-revitalisation](http://www.local.gov.uk/rural-recognition-recovery-resilience-and-revitalisation). See also p21

West Runton, UK



# Local leaders

## The LGA is a cross-party organisation led by local politicians

One of the strengths of the LGA is that we are a membership organisation and member-led, with councillors directing our day-to-day activities and business, setting our long-term priorities and goals, and agreeing campaigns and strategies.

This is reflected in our governance structures, with each of our four political groups – Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Independent – electing and providing the councillors who sit on our Board of Directors, the LGA Executive

Advisory Board and our nine policy boards each year.

Representation is based on political proportionality. Following the May 2021 local elections, the Conservatives are the largest group at the LGA, on 39.85 per cent, with Labour on 35.8 per cent, the Liberal Democrats on 12.46 per cent, and the Independents on 11.89 per cent.

The chair, vice and deputy chairs of the LGA are nominated annually by the four political groups and approved by the LGA General Assembly. Together they form the Board of Directors, and

direct the LGA's activities, business and strategic priorities.

The directors sit on and advise the LGA Executive Advisory Board, which also comprises the chairs of the policy boards, representatives of Wales and the nine English regions, additional members to maintain political balance, and non-voting representatives of the County Councils Network, District Councils' Network, the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities, and Local Partnerships.

The Executive Advisory Board contributes to the development of LGA policy, represents the views of local government, supports the directors to set the LGA's strategic direction, and holds the policy boards to account.

## Board of Directors (LGA board)



Cllr **James Jamieson** (Con, Central Bedfordshire) was elected Chairman of the LGA in July 2019 and was previously Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group from July 2018. He was first elected to Central Bedfordshire Council in 2009 and led the authority from 2011 to January 2021. [james.jamieson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:james.jamieson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



Cllr **Nick Forbes** CBE (Lab, Newcastle) is the LGA's Senior Vice-Chair and became Leader of the LGA's Labour Group in 2015. He has been a Labour councillor since 2000 and was elected Leader of Newcastle City Council in 2011. [nick.forbes@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:nick.forbes@newcastle.gov.uk)



Cllr **Izzi Seccombe** OBE (Con, Warwickshire) was elected Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group and became an LGA Vice-Chairman in July 2019. She was elected to Warwickshire County Council in 2001 and became its first female Leader in 2013. [cllirseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cllirseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk)



Cllr **Joe Harris** (Lib Dem, Cotswold) was elected Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group and Vice-Chair of the LGA in July 2021. He was first elected to Cotswold District Council in 2011, aged 18, and has led it since 2019. He is also a member of Gloucestershire County Council. [joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk](mailto:joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk)



Cllr **Marianne Overton** MBE (Ind, Lincolnshire) is an LGA Vice-Chair and has been Leader of the LGA's Independent Group since 2011. She is Leader of the Lincolnshire Independents, Leader of the Opposition on North Kesteven District Council and also sits on Lincolnshire County Council. [cllrm.overton@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:cllrm.overton@lincolnshire.gov.uk)



Cllr **Robert Alden** (Con, Birmingham) is a Deputy Chairman of the LGA. First elected in 2006, he is Leader of the Conservative Group on Birmingham City Council. [robert.alden@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:robert.alden@birmingham.gov.uk)



Cllr **John Fuller** OBE (Con, South Norfolk) is an LGA Deputy Chairman, Leader of South Norfolk District Council, and Chairman of the District Councils' Network. [jfuller@s-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:jfuller@s-norfolk.gov.uk)



Cllr **Teresa O'Neill** OBE (Con, Bexley) was first elected to the London Borough of Bexley in 1998 and became its Leader in 2008. She is an LGA Deputy Chairman. [councillor.teresa.o'neill@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:councillor.teresa.o'neill@bexley.gov.uk)



Cllr **Tudor Evans** OBE (Lab, Plymouth) has served as a councillor continuously since 1988, is Leader of the Opposition at Plymouth City Council, and a Deputy Chair of the LGA. [tudor.evans@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:tudor.evans@plymouth.gov.uk)



Cllr **Georgia Gould** (Lab, Camden), a councillor since 2010, is an LGA Deputy Chair, Leader of Camden Council, and Chair of London Councils. [Georgia.Gould@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Georgia.Gould@camden.gov.uk)



Cllr **Shabir Pandor** (Lab, Kirklees) was elected to Kirklees Council in 2002 and became its Leader in 2018. He is an LGA Deputy Chair. [shabir.pandor@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:shabir.pandor@kirklees.gov.uk)



Cllr **Michael Payne** (Lab, Gedling) is an LGA Deputy Chair, Deputy Leader of Gedling Borough Council, and a member of Nottinghamshire County Council. [cllrmichael.payne@gedling.gov.uk](mailto:cllrmichael.payne@gedling.gov.uk)



Cllr **Bridget Smith** (Lib Dem, South Cambridgeshire), an LGA Deputy Chair, is Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council and sits on the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Combined Authority. [Cllr.BridgetSmith@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.BridgetSmith@scambs.gov.uk)



Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (Residents' Association, Epsom and Ewell) is Vice-Chair of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources Committee, and an LGA Deputy Chair. [hdalton@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:hdalton@epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

## Policy board chairs and other executive members



Cllr **Kevin Bentley** (Con, Essex) is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board. First elected to Essex County Council in 2009, he became its Leader in May 2021.  
[cldr.kevin.bentley@essex.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.kevin.bentley@essex.gov.uk)



Cllr **Nesil Caliskan** (Lab, Enfield) is Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board. Elected in 2015, she became Enfield's first woman Leader in 2018, aged 29.  
[cldr.nesil.caliskan@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.nesil.caliskan@enfield.gov.uk)



Cllr **Peter Fleming** OBE (Con, Sevenoaks) is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board and has been Leader of Sevenoaks District Council since 2005.  
[cldr.fleming@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.fleming@sevenoaks.gov.uk)



Cllr **Shaun Davies** (Lab, Telford & Wrekin) is Chair of the LGA's Resources Board. He has led Telford & Wrekin Council since 2016 and is an LGA member peer.  
[shaun.davies@telford.gov.uk](mailto:shaun.davies@telford.gov.uk)



Cllr **David Fothergill** (Con, Somerset) has been Leader of Somerset County Council since 2017 and became Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board in May 2021.  
[djafothergill@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:djafothergill@somerset.gov.uk)



Mayor **Marvin Rees** (Lab, Bristol) is Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board. In 2016, he was the first mayor of black African heritage to be elected by a major European city.  
[mayor@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@bristol.gov.uk)



Cllr **David Renard** (Con, Swindon) is Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board. He has been Leader of Swindon Council since 2013.  
[drenard@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:drenard@swindon.gov.uk)



Cllr **Gerald Vernon-Jackson** CBE (Lib Dem, Portsmouth) is Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board and Leader of Portsmouth City Council. He has been a councillor since 2003.  
[cldr.gerald.vernon-jackson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.gerald.vernon-jackson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



Cllr **Anntoinette Bramble** (Lab, Hackney) is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, Equalities Advocate for the LGA's Executive Advisory Board, and Deputy Mayor at Hackney Council.  
[anntoinette.bramble@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:anntoinette.bramble@hackney.gov.uk)

## Non-voting members



Cllr **Sir Stephen Houghton** CBE (Lab, Barnsley) is Leader of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Chair of the LGA's Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA).  
[cldrstephenhoughton@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:cldrstephenhoughton@barnsley.gov.uk)



Alderman **Sir David Wootton** (Ind, City of London) is Chairman of Local Partnerships and a member of the City of London Corporation.  
[david.wootton@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:david.wootton@cityoflondon.gov.uk)



Cllr **Tim Oliver** (Con, Surrey) became Chairman of the County Councils Network in June 2021. He is Leader of Surrey County Council and a former Leader of Elmbridge Borough Council.  
[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)

*As first was going to press, the representative of the District Councils' Network was to be confirmed.*

## Wales and regional



Cllr **Ralph Bagge** (Con, South Bucks) is a regional representative substitute on the LGA Executive. He is Chairman of Buckinghamshire Council's Finance and Resources Select Committee.  
[Ralph.Bagge@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:Ralph.Bagge@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)



Cllr **Marc Bayliss** (Con, Worcester) is Leader of Worcester City Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills at Worcestershire County Council. He represents the West Midlands.  
[mbayliss@worcester-research.co.uk](mailto:mbayliss@worcester-research.co.uk)



Cllr **John Hart** (Con, Devon) was first elected in 1989 and has been Leader of Devon County Council since 2009. He is Chairman of South West Councils.  
[john.hart@devon.gov.uk](mailto:john.hart@devon.gov.uk)



Cllr **Linda Haysey** (Con, East Herts) has been Leader of East Herts District Council since 2015. She represents the East of England on the LGA's Executive.  
[linda.haysey@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:linda.haysey@eastherts.gov.uk)



Cllr **Simon Henig** CBE (Lab, Durham) represents the North East on the LGA Executive. First elected in 1999, he was Leader of Durham Council from 2008 to May 2021.  
[simon.henig@durham.gov.uk](mailto:simon.henig@durham.gov.uk)



Cllr **Peter John** OBE (Lab, Southwark) represents London on the LGA's Executive. He is a former Chair of London Councils and a former Leader of Southwark Council.  
[peter.john@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:peter.john@southwark.gov.uk)



Cllr **Rob Stewart** (Lab, Swansea) represents Wales on the LGA's Executive Advisory Board. He is Deputy Leader of the Welsh LGA and has led the City and County of Swansea since 2014.  
[cldr.rob.stewart@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.rob.stewart@swansea.gov.uk)

*There are vacancies for regional representatives from the South East, North West, East Midlands, and Yorkshire and the Humber.*

**i** The LGA's political year runs from September to the following July. You can find out more about the LGA's lead members, our governance arrangements, and policy and executive meetings by visiting [www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership](http://www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership)

# Success stories

The LGA can help your council create a new corporate narrative

**A**head of winter pressures, now is a good time to consider your council's post-pandemic purpose. To articulate this purpose, after so much change during the past 18 months, many councils will be looking to build a new narrative.

LGA communications peer reviews and health checks, carried out at councils across the country, as well as findings from our annual survey of communications leads, consistently show the need for a corporate narrative.

Now more than ever, developing a new narrative will help embed a coherent approach to building back after COVID-19 and strengthen democratic accountability.

So what is a narrative and why is it important?

A strategic narrative is a single compelling story created from different elements of information from across a complex organisation, such as a council. It is not a 'nice to have' but rather a fundamental element of the organisation's communication strategy.

The narrative sets out where the organisation has come from and where it wants to be, and translates corporate

aims and planned-for outcomes into language that engages stakeholders' hearts and minds.

It provides direction for what the council wants to achieve and how it behaves corporately and as individuals, and focuses the efforts of staff around a shared understanding of where the organisation is going and how they can contribute.

Effective organisational narratives build confidence and understanding for staff, partners and communities by structuring, prioritising and ascribing meaning to experiences and beliefs. They support behaviour change (in the organisation) or promote social change (in communities) by communicating core values, or, by reinforcing coherence in a world where we are bombarded with information and messages.

Authentic narratives make the vision of the organisation believable and build trust. They provide orientation in times

## One story

The 'One Story' narrative project began in May 2020 with a small group of communications professionals determined to change the (sometimes) negative perception of local councils.

Supported by the LGA, the group ran 12 online workshops and more than 100 people from 60 different councils took part.

Stories were gathered and have been shared in a book 'One story – councils, covid and better futures'.

A narrative was also developed from the research, the key themes of which are:

- We are run by people like you, who care.
- We stand up for you and stand alongside you.
- We make change happen in our common interest.
- We are here in tough times and good.



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*Investing time in the creation of a post-pandemic narrative is a useful and positive project for a council, its members, staff and community*

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of uncertainty when decisions need to be made quickly and complexity needs to be reduced. By telling a more 'memorable tale' emphasising specific aspects of the organisation, communication will have a greater impact.

## Bold, confident and proud

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council is a good example of an organisation that has developed and evolved its narrative over many years – even before the council existed – when local government reorganisation was proposed in 2015.

As Georgia Turner, BCP's director of communications and marketing, explained during a recent LGA webinar, the council's 'Big Plan' is "all about setting the ambition

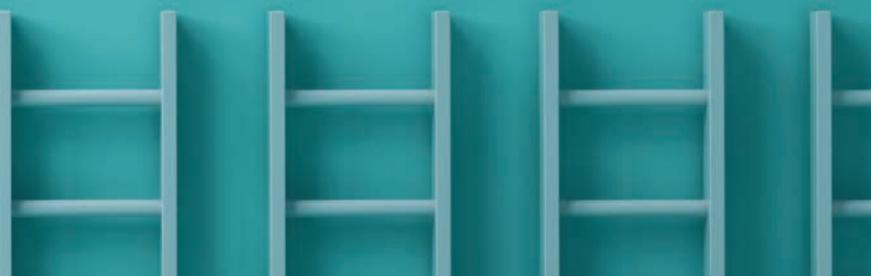
of our place – a story of growth, of bravery and innovation, and of maximising opportunities. A story of being Bold, Confident and Proud."

She added: "It's a story of creating new homes, jobs and investment value with delivery plans attached.

"It's held onto the local government reorganisation principles of our scale and our location and is broken down into

strategic themes – or chapters if you want to stick with the storytelling parlance – of 'Iconic', 'Rejuvenate Poole', 'Seafront', 'Infrastructure' (which includes digital and physical), and 'Act at scale', with underlying themes of communities, children and culture.

"Our Big Plan tells the story of a place thinking big and acting big, with the ambition and aspiration that goes with that."



Following research and information gathering across the council and community, it can be helpful to express the essence of an organisation on one side of paper. Once agreed, this 400-word narrative should be crystallised into a 30-word version and shared with images and film to engage as wide an audience as possible.

But how best to reach that stage? The skills needed to build your narrative – facilitation and engagement, gathering stories, telling them well and editing – often exist in communications teams, but you can also develop them across your council.

Help is at hand from the LGA's free toolkit, 'Building a narrative for your council' (see [www.local.gov.uk/comms-hub](http://www.local.gov.uk/comms-hub)).

The toolkit includes practical information and resources to help councils conduct research through workshops, focus groups and creative conversations. There is also guidance about sharing information through social media, images and video as well as case studies about councils who have gone through the process of creating a narrative.

Feedback from a well-attended LGA communications webinar about narrative earlier this year led to the organisation of a workshop in September for councils who have plans to embark on the process.

Support from members, senior leaders, staff and the community is crucial; research shows that the more the narrative is owned and shaped collectively, the more it will make a positive difference.

Collaboration with external organisations can also work well, as shown by Essex County Council in its work with Essex Partners. This is a group of public sector bodies, including universities and voluntary and community organisations, responsible for developing the vision for 'The future of Essex'.

As the Essex Partners began to work on a place brand for the county, the council wanted to refresh its existing narrative and align it with the wider ambitions for Essex. By working together, they were able to explain the narrative in the context of the place branding but also be clear about what the council would be responsible for and what would be the remit of other partners (see [www.local.gov.uk/essex-county-council-aligning-your-corporate-narrative-and-place-brand](http://www.local.gov.uk/essex-county-council-aligning-your-corporate-narrative-and-place-brand)).

Whatever approach your council takes, the key questions to ask in building your narrative are:

- What is your story saying about the purpose of your council?
- Why do officers and members in

your council choose to do what they do and why is that important?

- What is the human version of ourselves we want to see?
- What does your story say to the wider world?

To make a narrative project successful requires commitment from the council in terms of time and resources. The extra work should not be underestimated when teams are already working at full stretch.

But investing time in the creation of a post-pandemic narrative is a useful and positive project for a council, its members, staff and community.

The information gathered can inform policy and future projects, as well as provide authentic content to share with stakeholders. It encourages team building across the council and improves staff knowledge of other services, facilitating future collaboration.

The research will also involve genuine, two-way communication with communities and staff. The whole process should be engaging and exciting to be part of.

Once you have the agreed narrative, councils need to share and embed the story successfully. This can take time and the LGA toolkit includes some suggestions about working with your network of 'champions' to do this.

Evaluating the impact of your new narrative is also important and the toolkit gives practical advice about quantitative and qualitative measures.

Developing a narrative is never an end in itself, but rather a tool to help your organisation communicate and achieve its objectives. Councils and the communities they serve constantly evolve and their narratives should too.



**For the LGA's toolkit on building a council narrative and other communications resources,** please visit [www.local.gov.uk/comms-hub](http://www.local.gov.uk/comms-hub)



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

# Expert support on housing



## The LGA's Housing Advisers Programme is open for applications

**C**ouncils are at the heart of the country's recovery – as house builders, housing enablers and landlords; as planners, place-shapers and agents of growth, transport and infrastructure; as responsible guardians to the vulnerable and those facing homelessness; and as democratically accountable leaders in the communities we serve.

Councils share the collective national ambition to lead recovery, tackle their local housing crises, and create great places for current and future generations.

To help councils achieve these ambitions, we are delighted to announce that the Housing Advisers Programme (HAP) has returned for a fifth year, and is open for applications for 2021/22.

This innovative programme is part of the LGA's sector-led improvement offer and is designed to support councils and their communities in a simple and flexible way.

The programme will continue to fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils – or groups of councils – wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness.

HAP will award up to £20,000 to successful applicants for the purpose of securing expert advice in transforming how a service or partnership meets the housing need of communities.

To date, HAP has provided support to 125 projects that have delivered tangible outcomes for their communities.

The programme has also proven to be an excellent source of knowledge and expertise – allowing councils to share innovative ideas and ways to improve, whether building new homes, tackling homelessness, or planning thriving and flourishing places and economies.

See right for case studies illustrating the impact of the programme. For more information about the Housing Advisers Programme and how to apply, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/housingadvisersprogramme](http://www.local.gov.uk/housingadvisersprogramme) or email [housingadvisers@local.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvisers@local.gov.uk)

## The impact of housing advisers

**Cotswold District Council**, collaborating with neighbouring West Oxfordshire and Forest of Dean District Councils, secured funding from the LGA's Housing Advisers Programme to co-produce a net zero carbon toolkit, to plug a gap in the market for succinct, direct, and practical advice on how to achieve net zero housing.

The toolkit makes net zero carbon new-build and retrofit more accessible and is published under a Creative Communications licence that permits and encourages other councils to adapt and re-publish the tool, maximising its reach and impact. See [www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/cotswold-district-council-co-production-net-zero-carbon-toolkit](http://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/cotswold-district-council-co-production-net-zero-carbon-toolkit)

Frustrated at the rising numbers of vulnerable people struggling to access homes and support that met their needs, the **Somerset Strategic Housing Group** project focused on joining up housing, health, and social care services.

The project's impact was a reduction in time to rehouse people who are bed blocking or ready to move on from short-term supported housing (66 and 45 per cent respectively) and a 30 per cent reduction in the number of people waiting to move on. See [www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/better-futures-vulnerable-people](http://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/better-futures-vulnerable-people)

Consultants were commissioned by **Stoke-on-Trent City Council** to consider approaches to improve the private rented sector. They undertook research, collated 18 best practice case studies, and proposed a number of recommendations. As part of the process, the benefits of high-level engagement with tenants and landlords, and collaboration with other organisations, were realised, with 81 landlords responding to the landlord consultation.

The project is supporting the council to develop a strategic plan to improve the private rented sector by addressing poor management and disrepair. See [www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/improving-private-rented-sector-stoke-trent](http://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/improving-private-rented-sector-stoke-trent)

**i** For the LGA's sector-led improvement offer and support for councils, see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support)



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

## Levelling up to revitalise rural areas



### Rural areas are being left behind in the Government's levelling up agenda.

Research commissioned by the Rural Services Network (RSN) shows rural areas face a triple whammy of lower funding, higher costs and greater need, which is seriously hampering efforts to grow local economies and maximise economic growth and service delivery to their often sparse populations.

Rural areas are penalised in terms of government funding. In 2021/22, urban areas will receive some 61 per cent (£107) per head more in local government settlement funding assessment grant than their rural counterparts.

Rural residents pay on average 19 per cent (£96) per head more in council tax because of historical underfunding from government.

In addition, rural communities are disadvantaged by the way that government allocates spending spatially, thus failing to unlock the opportunities they can offer as part of a digitised, decarbonised and decentralised modern economy.

It costs more to deliver services in rural areas because of the sparsely populated nature of rural communities, which lack economies of scale.

Services can suffer from a lack of competition. In the case of social services, local provision is often non-existent, requiring expensive provision to be brought in from further afield.

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### *Rural communities have greater unmet needs*

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Finally, rural communities often face a greater demand for services.

An ageing population, poor public transport links, a lack of affordable housing and low wages means that rural communities have greater unmet needs.

The Government announced specific funding pots to help support disadvantaged communities, but research commissioned by the RSN shows that the Towns Fund, UK Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Fund are allocating funds through the selection of statistics that may not reflect a holistic approach to an area.

This, coupled with political imperatives, leads to money being directed towards urban, northern towns. The RSN has called on government to develop a fair set of metrics for the allocation of funds, that takes into account the true picture of rural areas.

The RSN's National Rural Conference, held in September, focused on 'levelling up to revitalise rural', and considered themes from the RSN's Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision campaign launched in

March (see [www.rsonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural](http://www.rsonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural)). The campaign sets out several asks of government in 14 key priority policy areas.

The message to ministers from our conference is loud and clear:

- Fairly fund rural services – delays caused by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that rural areas continue to suffer through unfair allocations of funding to deliver services.
- Ensure that processes put in place to 'level up' are based on evidence – while unemployment is relatively low in rural areas, rural jobs pay less, living costs are higher and official statistics often ignore rural poverty.
- Understand the needs of rural communities – government must ensure that policies are at a minimum rural-proofed, which also means collecting data at a low enough geography so that significant pockets of deprivation in rural areas are not hidden. The Government should take a strategic view of rural areas and develop targeted policies.

Only by tackling all of these major challenges can the Government ensure that rural areas contribute to the post-pandemic recovery to their full potential.



The Rural Services Network is a special interest group of the LGA, working on behalf of its members to champion rural services, see [www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk)

## Ambitious for our children



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

Children up and down the country went back to school in September after 18 months of disruption to their education because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I know that we have all worked as hard as possible with our schools and other education partners to ensure that the new school year is not disrupted so our children and young people can continue learning and spend valuable time with their peers.

Research by the Co-op has found that children as young as 10 think that the pandemic will change the rest of their lives, with older children already struggling

to find work and a third of children saying that the pandemic is making them less likely to pursue further education.

There must be a robust plan in place to support children's recovery and local councils should be at the forefront of this, given the in-depth knowledge they have about their communities and what they need.

Children will need time to socialise with their friends and classmates after so much time apart, so support such as breakfast clubs and after school activities that give children the opportunity to socialise and try new things is essential.

Providing proper mental health support is also crucial, recognising the impact that prolonged lockdowns will have had, as well as supporting children through the potential challenges of returning to a regular routine.

We do not yet know the full impact that the disruption to schooling will have on longer-term educational outcomes.

Tutoring should be made available to all pupils who feel that they need it and could benefit from it, and teachers need extra support for professional development in recognition of the new challenges that post-pandemic learning will bring.

We should be ambitious for our children and young people, investing in the skills and support that they will need for the workplaces of the future, and that the country will need to be internationally competitive.

As politicians, we have a duty to get this right.

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**“There must be a robust plan in place to support children’s recovery and local councils should be at the forefront of this”**

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

## Making the case for councils to new ministers

As first was going to press, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was working through a Cabinet reshuffle that has seen some important ministerial changes in key Whitehall departments for local government.

Chief among these was Michael Gove replacing Robert Jenrick MP as Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

This has been an incredibly difficult period for councils and their communities, and I would like to personally thank Robert for the support he has given to local government during the pandemic.

I have already met with Michael Gove to congratulate him on his appointment and offer local government's support.

During the meeting, I said that it will be important that councils are backed with the resources and freedoms they need to build places and deliver more for our residents and communities.



It is therefore a positive step that MHCLG will now be responsible for driving forward the Government's levelling up plans. We also look forward to discussing planning, building safety, funding and a host of other key issues for councils with the new ministerial team.

With a Spending Review looming, we also hope to find a friend in former MHCLG minister Simon Clarke, who is now Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

The review of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and high needs funding will be on our agenda when it comes to meeting new Education Secretary

Nadhim Zahawi MP, who many of us will have come to know as vaccines minister.

And we will be taking our concerns about the viability of council leisure and cultural services (see p6) to new Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Nadine Dorries MP.

The COVID crisis has shown what can be achieved when government empowers councils to innovate and create new services locally. We look forward to working with the Government's new ministerial team to ensure councils remain at the centre of the post-pandemic recovery and efforts to build back local.



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

## Party conference and social care

The Conservative Party Conference, which is approaching fast, is an important part of our political calendar, providing an opportunity to meet colleagues and ministers, and allowing us to debate and vote on party issues.

After last year's virtual conference, I am excited that this year we will be able to attend the event physically and engage face to face, while a virtual option is also available for those unable to join in person.

Each year, we participate in and sponsor sessions at the conference, offering expertise on various policy issues and creating networking opportunities.

If you have not already registered, I would encourage you to do so and to join our sessions: the LGA debate, 'Build back local: how do we harness the power of local government to level up the country' on 3 October; the LGA Conservative Group reception on 4 October; and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government team policy Q&A, organised by the Conservative Councillors' Association, on 5 October.

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**"It is positive that we have now started this conversation on adult social care"**

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On a slightly different note, as I write this article, the Prime Minister has set out the Government's plans to reform funding for adult social care. I think we can agree that it is positive that we have now started this conversation; however, there is still much detail to be studied and considered.

In the coming months, we will be engaging with the Government to share our concerns and will hope to help shape the new adult social care white paper, which is pledged to be published later this year.



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

## More answers needed on social care reform

There seems to be consensus across local government that the Prime Minister's announcement on social care funding and reform still leaves a lot to be desired.

For many in my party, the announcement represents a bailout for a pandemic-weary NHS rather than the long-term funding settlement for social care so many of us in councils crave.

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**"Alongside funding, insufficient staffing is still the biggest risk to the social care sector"**

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The local government family warned that the danger of wrapping up social care funding with that of the NHS was that one of the two would end up as a poor relation – that now appears to be the case.

Many have doubts about whether the £5.4 billion earmarked for social care in England over the next three years will stretch to cover the costs over that time period. How that figure was arrived at is still an open question.

Perhaps the biggest mystery is still around the 'reform' of care services, on which the announcement was mostly silent.

Alongside funding, insufficient staffing is still the biggest risk to the social care sector.

Pre-pandemic, there were more than 100,000 vacancies in social care. The realities of Brexit, the pandemic and the fact that social care work is still some of the worst paid in society only make matters worse.

In rural areas such as mine, this is even more of a challenge. House prices are astronomical, public transport non-existent and we have an increasingly ageing population.

The announcement was an opportunity to solve some of these problems; let's hope the Government provides more answers in the coming weeks.



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

## A bigger and more expensive care system

A series of successful hybrid meetings have started the new political year at the LGA, with leading members exploring key issues facing councils.

Your contributions to our think tanks have been vital. Colleagues and I have drawn on that work to inform the LGA's priorities, brief our vice-presidents on the Environment Bill and contribute to a Commons' select committee inquiry on the path to net zero.

The recent government announcement on social care was not well received. This proposal creates a bigger and more expensive care system, when we already cannot afford the current one.

The LGA has long called for funding, consulted widely on our own green paper and presented comprehensive suggestions. The only measures that add up to the significant sums needed are a rise in income tax or National Insurance.

The Government had pledged not to raise taxes. Now it has – not to resolve our problem, but to add to it. The cap to allow wealthier people to receive free or part-funded care is a significant additional burden many see as unaffordable.

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**"The largest part of the funding goes to the NHS, and leaves us short again"**

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The largest part of the funding goes to the NHS right away, and leaves us short, yet again.

We again call for the opportunity to co-produce a better solution. We need a genuine increase in funds for the care we give, not for it to be siphoned out via another door.

The LGA Independent Group's annual conference is on 29 October, just before the start of the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26. Please join us online or in person for some important debates (see [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)).

For more information about the LGA's political groups, please visit [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

# Natural partners for councils



**Rosemary Macdonald** is Chief Executive Officer of UK Community Foundations

**Community foundations are local champions, connecting people and organisations that want to improve their communities.**

They also inspire local philanthropy, advising people who want to give locally, both now and in the long term.

Community foundations are pivotal organisations within their local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector with deep understanding of local



**'Man About Town' is a multimedia project reducing social isolation run by Cloth Cat Leeds with support from Leeds Community Foundation**

needs and issues. UK Community Foundations is the membership body for the UK's 47 community foundations. Collectively, we are the fourth-largest funder of community groups, investing in the local people and organisations tackling the biggest issues facing communities today.

During the pandemic, our network distributed more than £76 million of National Emergencies Trust funding to organisations responding to hunger, isolation, digital exclusion and mental health.

We are now helping with the recovery, supporting a range of projects and organisations that are enabling communities to reconnect and revitalise after months of separation. You can read more about our work in our recent report, 'Investing, inspiring and including'.

Community foundations are natural partners for councils, and many of our members already have excellent relationships with their councils. For example, Sussex Community Foundation works closely with Brighton & Hove City Council, which led to a £1 million trust transfer in 2017 and a three-way partnership with a private donor who has given £250,000 to address homelessness.

Leeds Community Foundation has close relationships with both Leeds and Bradford Councils and runs funds for both; it is a major partner on the holiday activities and food programme for Leeds and supports a number of historic funds, while in Bradford it has focused on emergency and infrastructure funding.

Those who have not yet developed such links are keen to explore working together: a full list of community foundations can be found on our website (left). We look forward to collaborating as we work together to help our communities recover from the pandemic.

**i** **Community Foundations is a charity** and a national network of community foundations, bringing together people and organisations that want to improve their communities, see [www.ukcommunityfoundations.org](http://www.ukcommunityfoundations.org)



**Victoria Rodwell** is Head of Partnerships at the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (IPSE)

## Investing in small businesses



**Councils are the first line of support for building self-employed businesses back up after the pandemic**

For many self-employed people, the pandemic has been not only a health crisis but also an income crisis.

More than a million freelancers did not get financial support from government and IPSE research found one in four took on debt to get by while 27 per cent burned through all their savings.

Now, much of our adult population has been vaccinated and we are past 'Freedom day', but the financial damage is still there – especially for freelancers.

Our surveys found two out of five freelancers believe it will take more than a year for their business to recover, and one in five say it will take more than two years.

For many more, the financial damage was so severe it forced them out of freelancing altogether, driving the total number of self-employed down from five million to 4.2 million.

This is also a sharp hit to businesses across the UK who rely on freelancers' flexible expertise – especially in economic

downturns. Make no mistake: the undermining of the freelance sector is a crippling blow to local economies across the country.

So, how do we restore this reservoir of freelance talent for local businesses? Well, one thing's certain: this time the answer won't come from central government grants. Programmes such as the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme were enormously expensive and central government has firmly said no more will be coming.

So, this time, the answer must come from local government investing in their areas' smallest businesses.

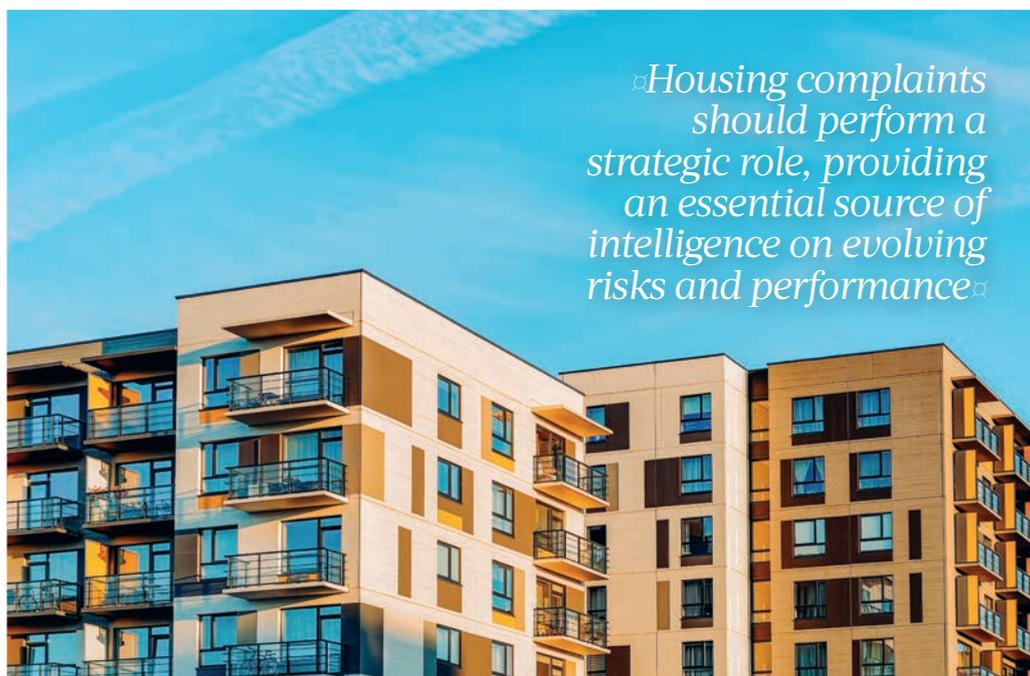
This is one area where IPSE can help. We have recently launched the IPSE Incubator – an innovative scheme to guide new freelancers through the first 12 months of self-employment and get their business off the ground.

It offers templates, guides and advice on all you need to make it in freelancing. We're already working with councils to fire up self-employment in their area. Find out if the IPSE Incubator could help your local area by emailing me, at [victoria.rodwell@ipse.co.uk](mailto:victoria.rodwell@ipse.co.uk)

**i** **The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed** is a not-for-profit association supporting self-employed workers, see [www.ipse.co.uk](http://www.ipse.co.uk)



**Richard Blakeway**  
is the Housing  
Ombudsman



*Housing complaints should perform a strategic role, providing an essential source of intelligence on evolving risks and performance*

# Learning from housing complaints

## Councillors perform a dual role on housing complaints.

They will provide advice to their constituents when they experience problems. But some will also be responsible for governing or scrutinising the performance of the council as a landlord.

In light of this latter role, the Housing Ombudsman Service recently produced guidance for councillors and governing body members. Boards, committees and scrutiny panels perform an important role in ensuring a stock-owning authority has a positive complaint handling culture.

This means several things but at its heart is ensuring there is a high level of awareness and accessibility to the complaints process, that it is fair and resolution focused, and that learning is captured and demonstrated.

We know many governing bodies are doing this successfully already, thereby strengthening their relationship with residents.

In our guidance, we share some of the

best practice we have seen, as well as outline our expectations of governing bodies and how complaints information can support them to improve service delivery.

Housing complaints should perform a strategic role, providing an essential source of intelligence on evolving risks and performance, potentially identifying issues which are not being picked up elsewhere, as well as the insights that are essential to improving resident services.

An important starting point for councillors is the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, published last year. This code is a condition of membership of our scheme and sets out the principles and standards for the effective handling of housing complaints.

We've had really positive engagement with the code since its publication, and we know many councils undertook a purposeful self-assessment against it.

Those assessments have been published, providing an opportunity to share best practice and learning between landlords.

Our guidance builds on this code, to consider how complaints can feature in the mission, risk analysis and resident focus of the landlord. It also suggests some key data that members will want to see to understand performance.

The guidance also sets out ongoing

engagement with complaints and our work as an ombudsman, including governance ensuring compliance with our orders.

Since the start of this year, we have issued 'complaint handling failure orders', including on complaints still within the landlord's procedure, providing real-time intelligence on complaints where the resident is struggling to make progress.

Each quarter, we report the orders we have issued, and governing bodies will want assurance any issues are being addressed.

Finally, our guidance sets out the different tools and information we offer councillors and board members to support their work. This ranges from the annual landlord performance reports we publish to individual decisions on casework.

Increasingly, we are publishing thematic reports into areas where we see common challenges across the social housing sector. Recent reports have covered cladding, and heating and hot water complaints.

The latter report, for instance, identified real issues with heat networks where landlords can struggle to respond effectively to problems. Our next report will look at damp and mould.

These reports provide important recommendations for landlords to consider, and governing bodies have a crucial role ensuring they do.

Indeed, while there is high compliance with our orders, I'd strongly encourage landlords to consider the collective learning provided by our decisions. This includes asking whether your approach is working and how can your policies be improved.

**i** **'Effective involvement of governing bodies: best practice guidance for landlords'** can be downloaded at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/news/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/news/). **For the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code**, see [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/)

# Securing public leisure and culture services



**Neil Shaw** is Chief Executive Officer of Rossendale Borough Council

**The past year has been interesting for Rossendale, where a local leisure and culture consolidation programme has taken place through three mergers.**

The borough council has played a key strategic and partnership role in helping several leisure and culture organisations to come together, using varying governance arrangements and refinancing arrangements with the council.

It would have been easier for the council to step back, but we recognised urgent action was needed to protect the future

**i** For more information about **Rossendale Leisure Trust**, please visit [www.rltrust.co.uk](http://www.rltrust.co.uk)

of partners delivering key local services.

The mergers have already had a positive impact, resulting in a more cost-efficient use of public funds, effective shared management, and the pooling of expertise. The whole process has been based on trust, openness, vision, care for our place, and working to identify solutions.

We have focused on retaining assets and their services for our local area and communities; ensuring their future viability and resilience; creating viable businesses employing local people and buying from local supply chains; mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and rebuilding together; and finding the balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

The mergers have led to Rossendale Leisure Trust – established in 2004 and the largest not-for-profit charitable trust in our valley – forming a group structure to include other local cultural and leisure organisations.

The newly formed RLT Group includes intra-group and partnership agreements

with Ski Rossendale, an outdoor ski and adventure facility, and the Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery; a full merger with the Community Leisure Association for Whitworth, responsible for a community-run leisure centre and civic hall; and the creation of a new trading company to enable aspects of the group to operate more commercially.

The partnership has protected smaller organisations through local amalgamations, bringing stronger strategic leadership and economies of scale to operations, and securing local assets for the future.

Although the Rossendale story is in its infancy, the bold approach taken by all partners has laid strong foundations, built on trust and openness, while delivering on a shared vision for the community.

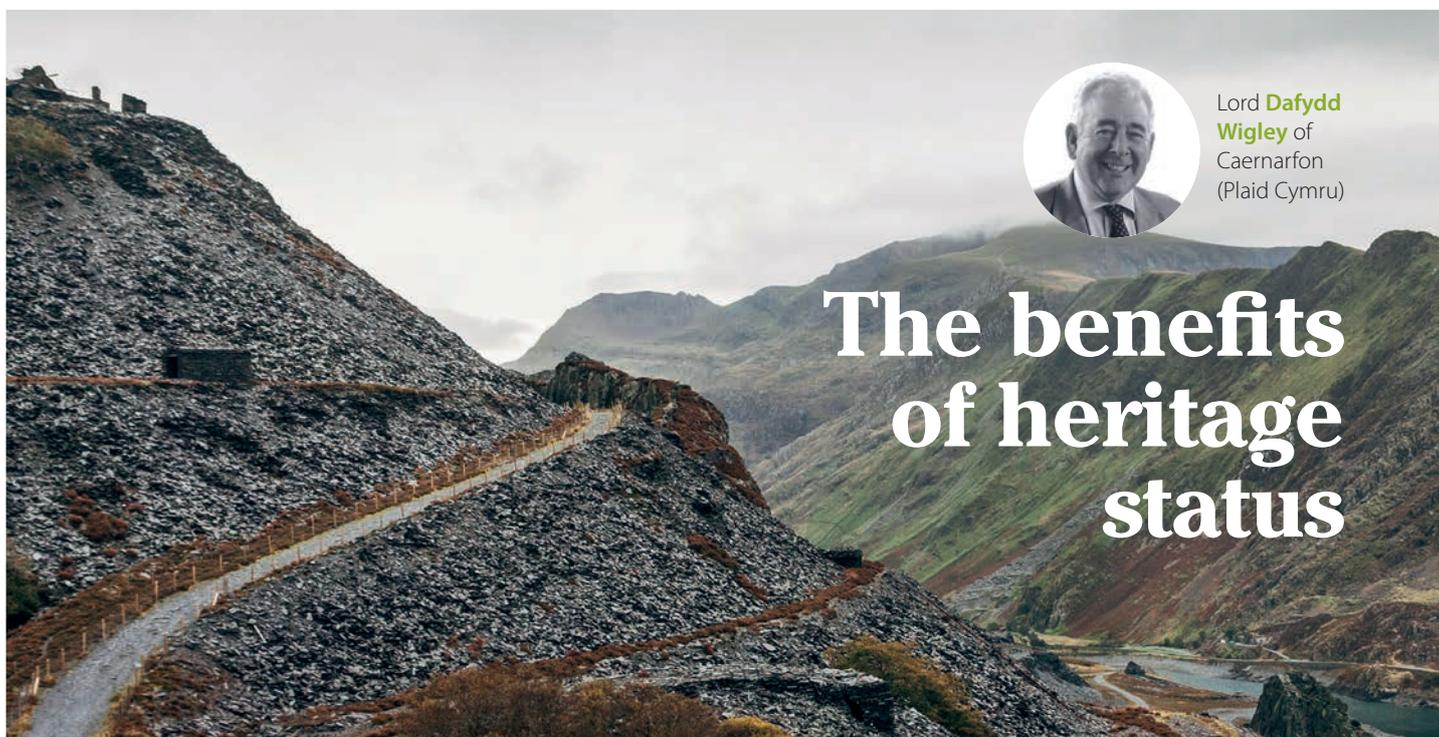


**first** is essential reading for **councillors and chief executives** in the LGA's **member local authorities** and both the magazine and wrapping are **fully recyclable**

But did you know that we publish all the stories from the magazine online each month, at [www.lgafirst.co.uk](http://www.lgafirst.co.uk)? If you're not already receiving it, you can also sign up for our fortnightly **first** e-bulletin, which links to key stories on the website, at [www.lgafirst.co.uk/subscriptions](http://www.lgafirst.co.uk/subscriptions)

If you find these e-versions of **first** fulfil your need for information from the LGA, why not think about reducing our carbon footprint by unsubscribing from the magazine? Just email [first@oscar-research.co.uk](mailto:first@oscar-research.co.uk) to let us know.

**Local Government Association**



Lord **Dafydd Wigley** of Caernarfon (Plaid Cymru)

# The benefits of heritage status

**Twenty years after the idea was first mooted, Gwynedd Council has been successful in its bid to secure World Heritage status for the slate landscape of north-west Wales.**

The bid, developed by a partnership led by Gwynedd Council and submitted by the UK and Welsh Governments, was endorsed by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO in its July meeting in China.

*□ The slate communities have much about which to be proud □*

This unique aspect of Welsh economic history now joins Wales' coal industry, represented by the Blaenavon industrial landscape of south Wales; Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal near Wrexham; and the Norman castles at Caernarfon, Beaumaris, Conwy and Harlech, in being recognised by UNESCO as having outstanding universal significance.

I had the privilege for the past six years of chairing the partnership that brought together public sector agencies and private businesses to formulate a bid that reflected slate community aspirations and met UNESCO criteria.

The campaign to gain this recognition for our slate landscapes was led by Gwynedd Council's Economic Development Department, under Cabinet Member Cllr Gareth Thomas and

directed by Sioned Williams, with Roland Evans and Hannah Joyce playing key roles.

Gwynedd Council's motivation in pursuing this project was three-fold. The first was economic – to increase employment opportunities for young people within their home area.

Second, it wanted to enable these communities to better appreciate their rich social and cultural heritage and thereby augment their self-confidence. And third, it wanted to help Wales expand its international profile and attract overseas visitors.

At its peak late in the 19th century, the slate industry was exporting huge quantities – to continental Europe, the United States, and Australia.

In Gwynedd, it employed 17,000 people at four major quarrying and mining complexes – at Bethesda, Llanberis, the Nantlle Valley and Blaenau Ffestiniog – and a host of smaller operations.

Equally significant was the cultural and social heritage associated with slate quarrying communities. Welsh was the overwhelmingly dominant vehicle of communication.

Slate quarrying expanded at the time of nonconformist religious revivals, so the area saw an explosion of chapels that provided a focus for community social and cultural life.

The social conscience of slate quarrymen was significant. In a highly dangerous industry, slate workers depended on each other for their safety. Mutual assistance and shared responsibility were central characteristics.

Between 1820 and 1860, workplace hospitals were developed in three quarry complexes, funded jointly by quarry owners and workers. These represented among the first workplace-based hospitals in Britain.

But there were also tensions between quarrymen and quarry proprietors. The conflict between Penrhyn quarry workers and the owners led to one of the longest strikes in British history (1900-03).

So the slate communities have much about which to be proud – economically, industrially, culturally and socially.

Today the only fully operational commercial quarry is the Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda. Smaller slate-related operations, including craft industries, are undertaken by a number of businesses.

Several slate-related tourist attractions have been successfully established, including narrow-gauge railways and an iconic zip wire experience.

Having secured World Heritage status, there come responsibilities – to safeguard the nominated properties and protect their lasting value for future generations; and to secure an acceptable balance between the needs of visitors and those of the local communities.

I have no doubt that Gwynedd Council is up to this challenge; but its work is only just beginning.



**Richard Parry**  
is Chief Executive  
of the Canal &  
River Trust

# Waterways – a natural choice



**Britain's canals offer huge opportunities to help local councils and their communities on the challenging journey towards achieving the Government's net-zero carbon targets by 2040.**

Originally constructed more than 200 years ago to serve the transport needs of the Industrial Revolution, our inland waterway network is one of the finest examples of living, working industrial heritage in the world.

With its extensive 'blue/green' corridors, it's ideally placed in our towns and cities to be at the forefront of the new 'Green Industrial Revolution' too.

More than 8.5 million people (nearly 15 per cent of the population) live within a kilometre of one of our waterways. In urban areas, the percentage is often much higher.

Because of their previous industrial use, many urban waterways run through heavily populated areas of deprivation and diversity, often with higher rates of ill-health and unemployment, so the opportunity to use waterways to support the 'levelling up' agenda is immense.

With the right investment, our waterways and towpaths offer a fantastic

sustainable transport network and an important 'natural health service' right across much of the country.

The trust has worked with many councils in recent years to transform muddy towpaths into all-weather surfaces, providing perfect off-road routes for walking and cycling for both commuting and recreation, and collaborated with developers and councils to provide active travel routes to support sustainable development.

We can also work with councils on a wide variety of carbon-friendly projects, from urban cooling and 'green' energy to sustainable urban drainage and development of traffic-free transport routes.

For example, our waterways already support hydro schemes generating the equivalent energy for around 10,000 homes, with the potential to create more hydro power for adjacent buildings and developments, particularly those located near weirs and locks.

Water-sourced heat pumps have the potential to save large quantities of harmful CO<sub>2</sub> entering the atmosphere, compared with the use of more

*Together we can unlock the full benefits of our waterways*

traditional energy sources.

This new technology is already helping to heat and cool buildings at large commercial sites such as GlaxoSmithKline's canal-side headquarters in London, The Hepworth Wakefield art gallery, the Mailbox shopping and media centre in Birmingham, York's Guildhall, and Baltimore Wharf in London's Docklands.

Our studies also show that urban areas next to a canal are on average 1° C cooler than neighbouring districts, helping reduce the 'urban heat island effect' that threatens to make summers in big cities intolerable in the future.

Finally, our waterways are also great for boats! Thousands of tonnes of freight are moved every year on our canals and rivers. Transporting goods by water can mean lower carbon emissions while also removing hundreds of vehicles from the roads.

The trust can also work with communities and local authorities through community adoptions and other initiatives to improve biodiversity and bring back declining wildlife into the heart of our urban landscapes.

Working together we can 'unlock' the full benefits of our waterways – for people and nature.

## Local path to net zero – training

This article is an edited version of one of a series of think pieces published by the LGA as part of its 'Local path to net zero' programme, flagging the significant role councils can and are playing in tackling the climate emergency, see [www.local.gov.uk/net-zero](http://www.local.gov.uk/net-zero).

The LGA is launching a new e-learning module on biodiversity that will provide an introduction to the subject and outline possible council actions. This resource will be available to all council officers and members, and can be found on our climate change hub: [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change)

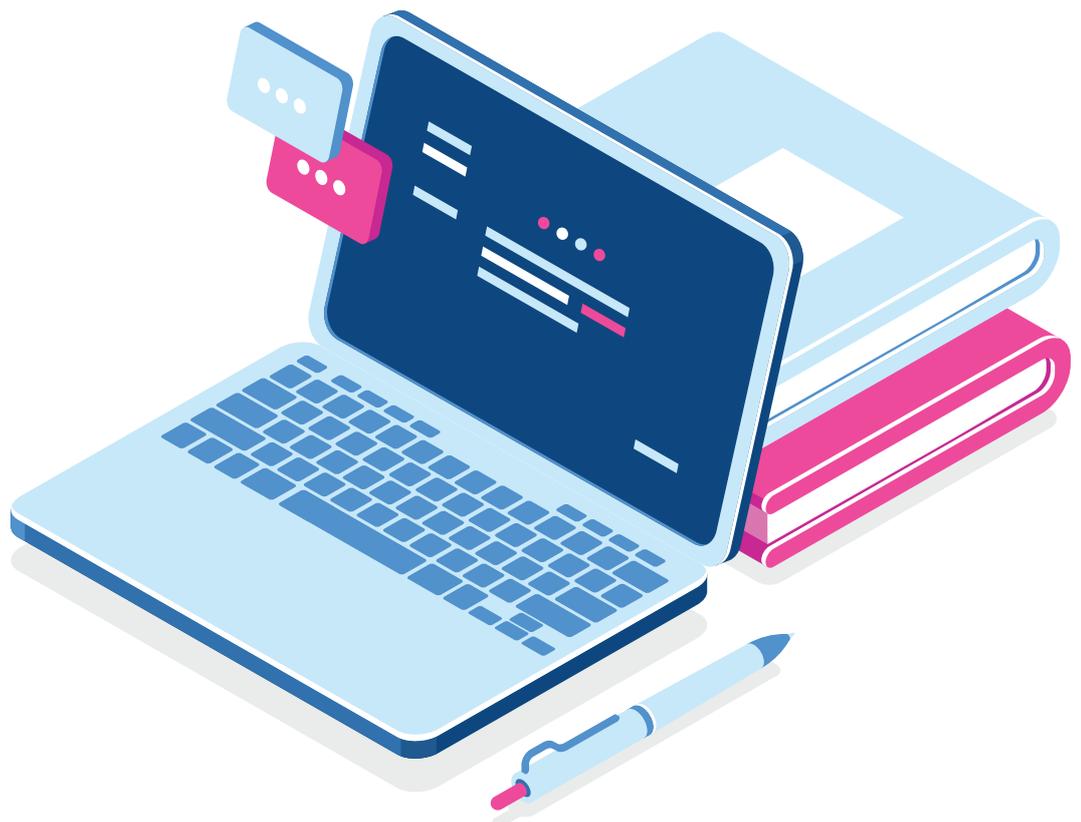
**i** **The Canal & River Trust is a charity looking after 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales.**  
For more information, visit:  
[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

# LGA virtual events programme

## The LGA continues to run a full programme of virtual events.

The events cover a wide range of local government issues including lessons from COVID-19, children's services, construction, climate change, cyber security, digital, funding, housing, licensing, planning and public health.

Hosted on the Zoom platform, the events are free to attend for all councils and government departments.



To see what's coming up next and to book online, please visit the LGA's events pages [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

# COUNCILLOR

## Improving digital citizenship

**Social media has become an important public space, where councillors share political information and engage with other councillors, officers and residents.**

It has the potential to improve democracy by facilitating bigger, freer and more open conversations and by allowing representatives to communicate directly with citizens.

But social media also opens the door for online abuse, harassment and intimidation, along with the swift spread of misinformation and disinformation that can impact local democracy.

The LGA has published a guide for councillors as they continue to navigate this space. It discusses what digital citizenship is, provides practical advice from fellow councillors and officers, and identifies useful resources, tools, research and further reading.

Improving digital citizenship is a key element of the 'Civility in public life' work by the LGA, Welsh LGA, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Northern Ireland LGA.

Digital citizenship is about engaging in appropriate and responsible behaviour when using technology, and encouraging others to do so as well. It encompasses digital literacy, ethics, etiquette, online safety, norms, rights, culture and more.

Developing digital citizenship requires us to improve online political communications. It is about expressing our opinions while respecting others' rights and personas and avoiding putting them at risk or causing unnecessary distress.

It is about respecting freedom of speech and disagreement while condemning abuse.

The LGA's guide provides practical advice and resources for councillors, while its partner publication, 'Improving digital citizenship: research and good practice', provides helpful background and research and looks at the good work going on in the UK and abroad to make a difference.

Advice and resources are based on the most recent research and best practice available, and on advice from councillors and officers themselves on what has worked.

For example, setting boundaries and expectations are important, as is ensuring accuracy.

Elected councillors and support officers frequently mention that members of the public have different opinions or understanding of what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. While some individuals engage in abusive behaviour intending to intimidate, some others simply fail to understand the impact of their behaviour.

This, of course, does not excuse any abuse, but can explain why it can be challenging for some people to recognise when they are being abusive.

Councillors suggest that having clear guidelines on what constitutes online harassment, abuse and intimidation will help to call out abuse and to implement consistent measures to tackle it.

It was noted that councillors are

influential in their communities and that by communicating respectfully with others they can help to generate positive engagement between councillors and residents.

Similarly, support officers and councillors agree on the importance of ensuring that the information they share is accurate. For this purpose, they recommend using official press statements and avoiding ambiguity in information shared.

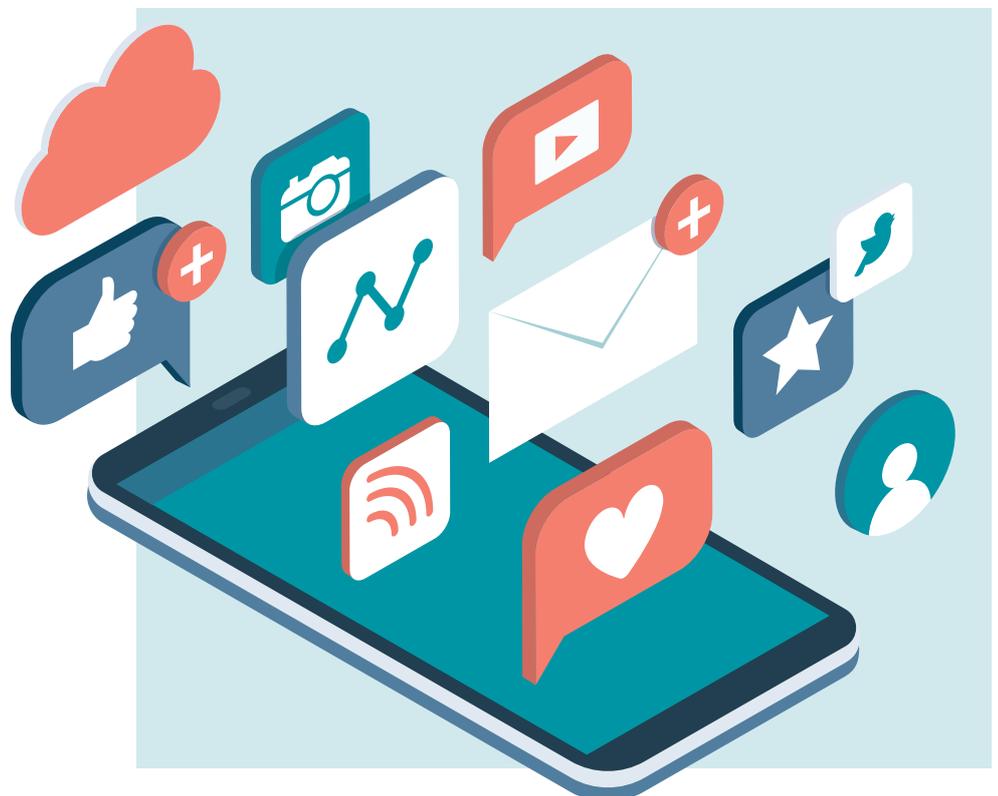
Councillors, as community leaders, should aim to lead by example, which includes avoiding the spread of unverified rumours, misinformation and disinformation as that would undermine the legitimacy of decision-making and cause problems within communities, such as in relation to public health or community safety.

Rumours about fellow councillors can also be very damaging for their reputation, safety and mental health.

The guidance presents some useful steps to follow to prevent sharing misinformation and disinformation and can also be applied to avoid the spread of rumours about councillors.



This is a summary of 'Improving digital citizenship: a practical guide for councillors', which can be downloaded for free at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications)



## Local by-elections

### Ashford, Downs North

GREEN GAIN FROM CON  
6.5% over Con Turnout 26%

### Calderdale, Park

LAB HELD  
74% over Con Turnout 25.3%

### Calderdale, Ryburn

CON GAIN FROM IND  
17.6% over Lab Turnout 24.9%

### Cheshire East, Wilmslow Dean Row

RES HELD  
10.6% over Con Turnout 22.5%

### Cumbria, Corby and Hayton

LIB DEM GAIN FROM IND  
42% over Con Turnout 30.4%

### Dover, Sandwich

CON HELD  
3.2% over Lib Dem Turnout 27.4%

### East Riding of Yorkshire, East Wolds and Coastal

CON GAIN FROM IND  
33.7% over Lab Turnout 18.4%

### Medway, Princes Park

CON HELD  
45.4% over Lab Turnout 18.8%

### Medway, Strood North

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
7.5% over Con Turnout 23.5%

### Newcastle, Castle

LIB DEM HELD  
17.3% over Lab Turnout 34.2%

### Newport, Graig

CON HELD  
6.3% over Lab Turnout 24%

### North East Derbyshire, Barlow and Holmesfield

CON HELD  
47.9% over Lab Turnout 26.5%

### North East Derbyshire, Killamarsh East

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
6.9% over Con Turnout 20%

### North Tyneside, Camperdown

LAB HELD  
42.2% over Con Turnout 18.6%

### Ribble Valley, Littlemoor

LIB DEM HELD  
11.5% over Con Turnout 21.8%

### Ribble Valley, Primrose

LIB DEM HELD  
17.8% over Con Turnout 17.6%

### Rutland, Oakham South

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
35.7% over Con Turnout 35.6%

### South Derbyshire, Seales

IND GAIN FROM CON  
0.9% over Con Turnout 23%

### South Tyneside, Cleadon and East Boldon

CON HELD  
1.6% over Lib Dem Turnout 40.7%



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



## Sterner tests ahead

It has been a long time since the Conservative party has endured so many defeats in council by-elections.

The party lost half the vacancies it was defending since our last update, but it is premature to conclude that this marks a sea-change in its fortunes.

The first of these defeats came at the hands of the Green party, which captured Ashford's Downs North ward. A look back at the previous May election shows a 20-point Conservative majority but a by-election held shortly afterwards saw the majority cut to just 39 votes ahead of the Greens.

Standing in both elections was Geoff Meaden, a seasoned local campaigner, who proved too experienced for his Conservative opponent.

The Conservative loss to the Liberal Democrats in Rutland's Oakham South is no surprise either. In May 2019, the three available seats attracted a full slate of Conservatives and only a solitary Liberal Democrat who topped the poll on that occasion.

That relatively rare event, 'Lab gain from Con', features twice.

The first took place in Medway's Strood North ward. In 2019, the three-member ward returned two Conservatives and one Labour councillor. This vacancy arose after the death of Steve Iles, who had finished third in that election.

Killamarsh East in North East Derbyshire became only the fourth

recorded Labour gain from the Conservatives since the last General Election. Here, too, there were two by-elections in close succession, the first of which the Conservatives held.

The 2019 result was closely contested – 47 votes separating first from fourth with the Conservatives only securing the second seat by a single vote. In both 2003 and 2007, Labour won both seats unopposed.

The fifth Conservative defeat, in Seales ward in South Derbyshire, has more twists and turns than most. Cllr Amy Wheelton, first elected in 2019, became a casualty of a schism within the authority's Conservative group

and sat as an Independent Conservative.

Last June, she resigned her seat on health grounds but following good news on that front she decided to contest her own vacancy and won by nine votes.

Each of the Conservative defeats, therefore, contain features that make it difficult to identify a broad trend. The party has proved remarkably resilient in defending its territory, but with its national poll ratings slipping perhaps sterner tests in council by-elections lie ahead.

**i** For more details of these and other recent by-election results, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

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For more information and to book your virtual space, please visit **[www.ncasc.info](http://www.ncasc.info)**

Speakers include:

**Kate Green MP**

Shadow Education Secretary

**Professor Chris Whitty**

Chief Medical Officer,  
Department of Health and Social Care

**Dr Jenny Harries OBE**

Chief Executive, UK Health  
Security Agency