

# first

No.637 July 2019

www.local.gov.uk

the magazine for local government

## Interview

"I love this job: **it has been an absolute honour to represent local government and help make a difference**"

Lord Gary Porter, outgoing LGA Chairman

24, 28

Local   
Government  
Association



10

**LGA conference**  
Councils need funding and powers to deliver locally



14

**Profit with a purpose**  
Ensuring social value in commercial activities



30

**Protecting jobs**  
Helping local suppliers win council contracts

“We wanted to enhance our **telecare** service. PPP Taking Care was the best solution.”

**Arun District Council**

*Robin Wickham*  
Group Head of Community Wellbeing

**WE PARTNER WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SOLVE YOUR TELECARE WORRIES.**

As an AXA company we can bring healthcare and digital innovation to your telecare. We're not tied to manufacturers so can provide you the best solution for the digital switchover.

Exclusive telecare provider to  ageuk



**PPP Taking Care**

## Public service



The LGA's annual conference kicks off in Bournemouth from 2-4 July, providing plenty of opportunities for us to discuss how we can deliver the best public services for our communities, reinvigorate the localism debate and share best practice.

Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary James Brokenshire and Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, will be among our speakers. You can find out more about conference in this edition of **first** (p10-11), and read about some of the councils that will be presenting their inspiring new ideas for improving services at conference's Innovation Zone (p13).

Local Government Challenge – our own version of 'The Apprentice' – will also come to its conclusion, with conference delegates helping select the winner from four finalists (p23).

Elsewhere, we mark the centenary of the Addison Act, which introduced council housing (p18) – and there will be more coverage in next month's **first**, as we head towards the Act's anniversary in late July.

Our latest guidance on commercialisation explains how you can ensure 'profit with a purpose' by building social value into contracts (p14). We also have a feature on the Government's consultation on building safety, published just ahead of the second anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire (p21).

Lord Porter is Chairman of the LGA

Editor **Karen Thornton**  
Design & print **CPL** [www.cpl.co.uk](http://www.cpl.co.uk)  
Advertising [john.wheaton@cpl.co.uk](mailto:john.wheaton@cpl.co.uk)

Write to **first**: Local Government Association  
18 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

Email [first@local.gov.uk](mailto:first@local.gov.uk)  
Tel **editorial** 020 7664 3294  
Tel **advertising** 01223 378 042

Photography **Getty Images** and **iStock.com** unless otherwise stated. Cover **Andrew Baker**

Circulation 18,000 (June 2019)  
**first** is published online at [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first) at least two days before the magazine. To unsubscribe email [first@oscar-research.co.uk](mailto:first@oscar-research.co.uk)

**The inclusion of an advert or insert in first does not imply endorsement by the LGA of any product or service. Contributors' views are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the LGA.**

**Local**   
**Government**  
Association

# contents

## news

- 4** Mental wellbeing  
Fire service inspections
- 5** Public health  
Sexual health  
Sugary drinks



- 6** Armed forces  
Cold water shock  
Planning changes
- 7** Children in need  
Refugee resettlement  
Sure Start
- 8** Council funding  
Food safety  
Council tax scams

## features

- 10** LGA annual conference
- 13** Innovative practice
- 14** Profit with a purpose
- 17** Local Government Challenge
- 18** Council housing
- 21** Building safety
- 23** Sector-led improvement



## comment

- 27** Local democracy
- 28** LGA chairman and group leaders
- 30** Local suppliers  
Environmental paradox

## interview

- 24** Lord Porter, LGA Chairman  
“We’ve got a hell of a lot less cash than we had four years ago. But councils have managed to keep everything going”



## regulars

- 33** Parliament – funding
- 34** Councillor – election observers
- 35** Local elections



## New proposals on preventing mental illness

**Prime Minister Theresa May has pledged extra funding for councils to help develop and strengthen their suicide prevention plans, as part of a wider prevention plan on mental health.**

Proposals also include training teachers to spot early warning signs of mental illness among pupils, and a White Paper on the Mental Health Act.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Councils already make a significant contribution to the mental wellbeing of their local communities through providing libraries, parks and leisure centres that help to improve people's general mental wellbeing, as well as helping people to live fulfilling lives beyond diagnosis and treatment.

"This is in addition to commissioning services such as supported housing, substance and alcohol abuse and money advice that help people in vulnerable circumstances.

"The extra funding announced to strengthen and deliver local suicide prevention plans is a clear endorsement of councils' locally driven approach and a recognition that, by working together and supporting one another, we can reduce rates of suicide and save lives.

"It is also important that the commitment to overhaul the Mental Health Act is matched by a commitment to invest more in the community mental health services that prevent people from reaching crisis point in the first place and support people to recover."

He added: "We support plans to train teachers and social workers in spotting signs of mental ill-health, as well as the new mental health units that schools can refer to.

"However, we still need onsite counselling services in every school and increased investment in the school nurse workforce, as this would help ensure children can access the support as early as they need without being turned away, as well as reduce overall demand on specialist services.

"To achieve true parity of care between mental and physical health, we need a root and branch overhaul of mental health services, which focuses on prevention and early intervention, particularly for children and young people."

The LGA and the Association of Directors of Public Health have been awarded £600,000 in sector-led improvement funding to help reduce and prevent incidents of suicide in communities, by helping councils share best practice, advice and support.

## 'Variations' in fire protection

Most fire and rescue services are good at responding to emergencies, but there is too much variation in how well the public is protected, according to a new report.

An inspection of 16 fire and rescue services by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found that most of them are operating with reducing budgets and fewer staff.

Inspectors are concerned that two services may not be able to absorb further budget reductions without this having a negative effect on the service they provide to the public.

HMICFRS has recommended that common definitions, standards and applications are adopted in four priority areas, including identifying and measuring emergency response times, defining high-risk premises for fire protection purposes, and setting how frequently those buildings are checked.

It said the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council and the LGA should establish a programme of work to make these consistent "as soon as practicable".

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, which represents 48 fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales, said: "This report reaffirms that the key strengths of fire and rescue services are their dedicated staff, who respond effectively to emergencies to help save lives and prevent fires, the public's great respect for them, and the increasing priority given to support services for their workforce, which has to deal with traumatic incidents.

"Improvements have been made in the short period since the first tranche of inspections, including significant and ongoing sector transformation.

"However, with nearly half of those fire and rescue services inspected relying on old and unreliable equipment, and some unable to absorb any further budget cuts, it is clear that more funding is essential if they are to modernise and deliver these improvements to their full potential."





## Public health to stay with councils

**Public health services, including sexual health services and school nurses, are to remain with councils, rather than be transferred back to the NHS, the Government has confirmed.**

Announcing the decision at the LGA's Councillors' Forum in June, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock praised the "comprehensive, compelling and clear" evidence provided by councils.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "We are delighted that the Secretary of State has accepted the LGA's powerful case for councils to keep their vital role and valued responsibilities for providing public health services.

"Councils have worked hard to provide and commission these services, including sexual health clinics, drug and alcohol treatment services and health visitors, despite facing reductions of £700 million to their public health grant between 2015/16 and 2019/20."

The decision came ahead of a joint report

by two health charities, The King's Fund and Health Foundation, which called for £1 billion a year to reverse cuts in public health funding.

Cllr Hudspeth said: "This analysis echoes our own calls for public health funding reductions to be reversed, in order to help people live longer, healthier and happier lives. Councils are determined to maintain vital public health services, but the reality is that many local authorities are having to make difficult decisions on these key services.

"Further reductions to the public health budget reinforce the view that central government sees prevention services as nice-to-do but ultimately non-essential. Interventions to tackle teenage pregnancy, air quality, child obesity, sexually transmitted infections and substance misuse cannot be seen as an added extra for health budgets.

"Local authorities were eager to pick up the mantle of public health in 2013 but many will now feel that they have been handed all of the responsibility but without the appropriate resources to do so."

## Call for sexual health strategy

MPs have recommended the establishment of a national sexual health strategy, to help both providers and commissioners deliver sexual health services to a high quality and consistent level.

The Health and Social Care Committee's report also warned that cuts to spending on sexual health were a false economy.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said a national health strategy is essential.

"Co-operation between services is absolutely critical for effective strategic planning. This is increasingly important as sexual health services are now reaching a tipping point amid record demand and the absence of adequate funding," he said.

"Radical action is needed in the

Government's impending Prevention Green Paper, to truly help address access to contraception and tackle the growing threat of sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis and gonorrhoea."

Cllr Hudspeth added: "Government reductions to councils' public health budgets are short-sighted and need to be put on a more sustainable footing, otherwise they will undermine the objectives we all share to improve the nation's public's health and tackle inequalities. These cuts need to be reversed as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

"We are happy to work with the committee and government on taking forward the many helpful recommendations in this report."

## 'Proven' ways to cut sugary drinks

Measures including limiting the availability of sugary drinks in schools, price increases, easy-to-read labels, better product placement in supermarkets, offering healthier alternatives and community campaigns are all helping reduce the consumption of sugary drinks, according to a recent report.

Public health research network Cochrane reviewed 58 studies of initiatives aimed at helping people drink fewer sugar-sweetened beverages, to improve their health. The studies lasted about a year and involved more than one million adults, children and teenagers, in schools, restaurants or shops.

Cochrane's other recommendations include improving the availability of low-calorie beverages at home, such as through home deliveries of bottled water and diet drinks.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "More than a year since the soft drinks industry levy was introduced, manufacturers have cut the amount of sugar in their products, while hundreds of millions of pounds have been raised in revenue to promote healthy eating in schools and tackle child obesity.

"However, as this report demonstrates, more can and should be done by the soft drinks industry to improve customer choice, such as better labelling and providing healthier alternatives.

"Some energy and sports drinks have up to 17 teaspoons of sugar in a 500 ml bottle – more than twice the daily allowance for adults. What is needed is a universal adoption of a labelling system which provides an instant 'at-a-glance' understanding of sugar content.

"Raising awareness of the amount of sugar in food and drink, while giving families a more informed choice, is crucial if we are to make a vital breakthrough in the fight against tooth decay and obesity."



## Planning relaxation

The LGA has called for an independent review of the impact of permitted development rights after the Government announced a permanent relaxation of the rules that allow home extensions to go ahead without the need for a full planning application.

As part of the reforms, shops will also be able to change to office space without a full planning application.

Responding to the announcement, Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Planning Spokesman, said: "Permitted development rules are taking away the ability of local communities to shape the area they live in and ensure homes are built to high standards with the necessary infrastructure in place. They have resulted in the potential loss of thousands of desperately-needed affordable homes.

"While we recognise building extensions under permitted development have been popular with homeowners, the planning process exists for a reason."

## Blue Badge extension

The Department for Transport has announced a review of Blue Badge fraud and extended the scheme to those with 'hidden' disabilities.

It has been hailed as the biggest change to the scheme since the 1970s. The new criteria come into force on 30 August.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Transport Spokesman, said: "Councils know that Blue Badges are a vital lifeline for disabled people that help them get out and about to visit shops or family and friends, and many have already been approving badges for people with non-physical disabilities.

"Theft and misuse of Blue Badges under the existing scheme is on the rise. Despite limited resources, councils are trying to crack down on dishonest motorists by prosecuting offenders and seizing Blue Badges suspected of being used illegally, so it is good that the Government has listened to our concerns and has committed to a review that will support councils in tackling fraudulent use."



# Veterans' support needs funding

**Not enough veterans and service personnel are getting the support they need, with nearly two-thirds of councils receiving no government funding for them in 2016/17 and 2017/18.**

A new report commissioned by the LGA says that councils are delivering first-class support to the armed forces community, but they urgently need more funding from central government to cope with the additional pressures on local services.

The report found that the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has been vital in enabling councils to get projects off the ground that support their forces communities. Around £6.6 million of funding from the trust's local government programme has made a difference, but is short-term, with many parts of the country not benefiting, according to the LGA.

Every council has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant – a promise to treat the armed forces community fairly – with local authorities supporting veterans, armed forces personnel and their families to access vital public services.

With better understanding of the needs of the armed forces community, councils are training frontline staff to signpost veterans to the services they need the most. However, the additional demand means councils need immediate investment to ensure that services personnel don't miss out on the support they need.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Veterans

and serving personnel deserve access to whatever services they need, without any barriers, and it is vital that we recognise the valuable contribution of our armed forces communities.

"Councils across the country are already delivering support but, without adequate funding from the Government, that support is under threat.

"Councils cannot continue to afford the cost of additional pressures on their services forever. National partners also need to do their bit and work with service and ex-service personnel and councils to ensure that safety nets are in place and to prevent the need for longer-term support.

"It is only right that councils are equipped with the funding they need to continue to support the armed forces community."

● 'Delivering the Armed Forces Covenant locally' can be downloaded at [www.local.gov.uk/delivering-armed-forces-covenant-locally](http://www.local.gov.uk/delivering-armed-forces-covenant-locally)



## 'Teach young about cold water shock'

Children need to be taught about the dangers of cold water shock as new figures show the number of young people drowning accidentally in the UK rose by almost a quarter last year, the LGA has urged.

Cold water shock, which can affect breathing and movement, is one of the biggest causes of drowning and can take hold when people enter cold seas, rivers, canals and lakes. Temperatures can be as low as 15C in the summer – half that of typical swimming pools heated to 30C.

Although there has been an overall reduction in the number of accidental drownings over the past three years, latest figures from the National Water Safety Forum show that the number of people aged 19 and under who drowned

accidentally in the UK increased by 24 per cent, from 25 in 2017 to 31 in 2018.

Accidental drownings for all age groups in the combined months of June, July and August rose by 24 per cent, from 83 to 103, over the same period.

The LGA is calling for the dangers of cold water shock to be taught in swimming lessons, or as part of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons in schools.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Teaching children about the dangers of cold water shock while they learn to swim or as part of PSHE lessons would be a simple way to improve water safety across the country, and could make the vital difference in helping to save lives and avoid the tragic aftermath for families."



## New measures to help vulnerable pupils

**The Government has announced plans to improve the education of disadvantaged children after a report found they are falling behind at school.**

At least 1.6 million children who needed a social worker had a higher rate of school absence from 2012 to 2018, according to a report by the Department for Education.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said he wanted to raise awareness of the difficulties these children face through improved information sharing between councils and schools, to help keep them in full-time education.

Proposals include altering school admission codes to speed up the process of changing schools for vulnerable children, such as domestic abuse victims.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said councils – if they are properly funded – were “uniquely placed” to contribute to improving residents’ social mobility because of their responsibility for services such as welfare, housing, family services and public health.

She added: “One of the keys to tackling inequality and social mobility is to give people

the best start in life, so it is good that the Government is looking at how to improve education for disadvantaged children. However, as it stands, schools are discouraged – both financially and in league tables – from being inclusive of all children.

“Government could support and incentivise mainstream schools to improve inclusion by setting clearer national expectations of what every school should offer a child and young person, with Ofsted holding to account schools who fail to support looked-after children, children in need or those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

“Schools and councils are both struggling with insufficient budgets, which makes it increasingly difficult to give children the support they need to thrive. Councils face an £8 billion funding gap by 2025, while an additional £1.6 billion is required in high needs funding by 2021.

“It is essential that Government uses the forthcoming Spending Review to address these shortfalls, and to ensure schools are adequately funded to support all children to achieve their ambitions.”

## Benefits of Sure Start centres

New research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has found that the Sure Start programme has delivered major health benefits for children in poorer neighbourhoods.

The study is the first of its kind to follow children who had access to Sure Start services – including family health and early years care and education – right through to the end of primary school.

It found the programme significantly reduced hospitalisations among children by the time they finished primary school. At every age in primary school, Sure Start reduced hospital admissions for injuries, the IFS said.

It found spending on Sure Start peaked at £1.8 billion a year in 2010 (at current prices) but has been cut by two-thirds since. Between 2011 and 2017, more than 500 Sure Start sites were closed.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: “Children's centres can provide a lifeline for children, parents and carers, offering an incredibly important service in the local community.

“This could be anything from advice for parents on physical and mental health, caring for a newborn, or simply a place for children to enjoy free play and interact with one another.

“While many councils have adapted well to the funding pressures and changed how they provide children's centre services – in particular to target those communities most in need of support – there is a growing sense that councils have done all they can within ever tightening budgets.

“It is inevitable that without new investment from government in children's services, councils will face the difficult but unavoidable decision of having to cut or close early help services such as children's centres.

“Children's services face a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025. This is why it is hugely important that the Government delivers a long-term sustainable funding solution for children's services in this year's Spending Review.”

## Resettlement scheme to continue

The Government has announced that the global resettlement scheme for refugees will continue after 2020, with plans to resettle around 5,000 of the world's most vulnerable refugees in its first years.

Ministers have said they will fund the scheme for the first year, but the LGA says councils will need long-term funding for the resettlement programme to work effectively.

The LGA said: “Councils are eager to build on their strong track record of supporting those resettling in new communities and are pleased the Government has confirmed it will continue the resettlement scheme after 2020.

“While it is good that councils will receive initial one-year funding to deliver the scheme at the same level, this needs to be followed through with long-term funding in the Spending Review.

“We look forward to continuing to work with government and other partners to make sure all new arrivals get the support they need to settle into their new communities.

“Clear links need to be made across all the programmes that resettle asylum seekers, refugee families and children to make sure there is enough funding for all new arrivals building new lives in the UK.”





## Warning on council tax scams

Criminals posing as council staff are targeting people across the country in a new wave of council tax scams offering bogus refunds or threatening fines, the LGA has warned.

Fraudsters are telling people via text, email and phone that they have either paid too much council tax and are due a refund, which they offer to claim on their behalf for a 'fee', or demand payment for arrears.

Another scam aims to convince people their property is in the wrong council tax band and offers to secure a refund, again in return for a payment.

Council tax band reassessments are available for free, but fees of £150 have been quoted in the scams that falsely claim to be from local councils or the Valuation Office Agency.

Some also use the Government's GOV.UK branding in text messages and often include a link to a fake website to claim the refund.

The LGA is urging anyone who receives an email, text message or phone call offering a council tax refund not to give out any personal information, particularly bank account details, or debit or credit card details.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "These council tax scams can damage people's lives, both financially and emotionally, and anyone can be fooled by them, especially if they appear to look official.

"Anyone who is contacted about a council tax refund or assessment over their council tax band that includes a request for personal information and bank details should ignore it and report it.

"Councils will never phone, text or email residents to ask for a payment to release a council tax refund or ask for personal bank details."

# Council funding is 'unsustainable'

**England's council funding system is unsustainable – with big choices looming on how councils are funded and what services they provide, according to a recent report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS).**

It found that spending on local services by English councils fell by 21 per cent between 2009/10 and 2017/18, with some services seeing much deeper cuts. Spending on planning and development fell by more than 50 per cent, and on highways and transport by more than 40 per cent over the same period.

Meanwhile, current plans for councils to rely on council tax and business rates for the vast bulk of their funding don't look compatible with current expectations of what councils should provide, the report warns.

The IFS is calling for a national debate on "how much we are willing to pay and what we expect of councils", or else face a situation where council services are gradually eroded – until ad hoc funding is found as a response to political pressure.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's

Resources Board, said: "With councils in England facing an overall funding gap of £8 billion by 2025, the IFS is right to reinforce our warning that unsustainable funding cuts and demand pressures are pushing local services to the brink.

"Pressures continue to grow in children's services, adult social care, and efforts to tackle homelessness. This is leaving less and less money for councils to fund other vital services, such as the maintenance of parks, certain bus services, cultural activities and council tax support for those in financial difficulty.

"Huge uncertainty also remains about how local services will be paid for next year and beyond. The Spending Review will therefore be make or break for vital local services and securing the financial sustainability of councils must be the top priority. If the Government fails to adequately fund local government in the Spending Review then there is a real risk to the future financial viability of some services and councils."

## Cuts have impact on food safety regulation

Regulation ensuring food is safe is showing "signs of strain" as councils cut staff and delay hygiene checks, according to a National Audit Office (NAO) report.

The financial watchdog said the Food Standards Agency and other departments must work together to make food regulation financially sustainable, but that spending on food hygiene by local authorities fell by an estimated 19 per cent between 2012/13 and 2017/18 because of funding pressures.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said councils had lost 60p out of every £1 they had from government to spend on services since 2010.

He said: "These significant funding cuts are affecting all council services – which

include trading standards budgets and staffing being cut by around half since 2010 – and undoubtedly make it extremely difficult for some councils to maintain previous levels of food work, given the competing demands of areas such as social care, children's services and homelessness.

"The NAO is right that there is a pressing need for government to come up with a sustainable funding model for food regulation, and for other vital areas of regulation. This either needs to be through businesses meeting the costs of regulation, or through councils being properly funded.

"Government must use the forthcoming Spending Review to plug the £8 billion funding gap councils will face by 2025."





## Town halls are more than just buildings CCLA is more than just an investment manager

*Town halls are the most visible symbol of local democracy.  
We are celebrating our great municipal buildings - the good, the  
bad and the ugly. They hold so many fascinating stories about civic  
pride, why local government matters and what the future holds.*

# CCLA

INVESTMENT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES  
SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

CCLA Investment Management Limited and CCLA Fund Managers Limited  
are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

# features

## Councils can

The LGA is calling for a new localism settlement, to ensure councils have the funding and powers they need to transform our local communities

Councils need more money and government needs councils to deliver its ambitions. Working together, councils can be a powerful ally to support government to deliver on its priorities.

But to do so, ministers must deliver a Queen's Speech, Spending Review and reforms to policy that deliver the funding and powers councils need to make the changes that will transform our local areas.

So says the LGA's 'Councils can' report, scheduled for launch at its annual conference in Bournemouth in early July.

The conference paper sets out what councils are: leaders of place that make a big difference every day to people's lives. It highlights how councils have improved the lives of their residents, giving examples across the range of more than 800 services provided, from public health, food safety and transport, to adult social care, children's services and waste.

It says councils can build the homes the nation needs, improve lives and save money by preventing ill-health, deliver brighter futures for all children, boost jobs and growth, create places where people want to live, support adults of all ages to live the lives they want to lead, and build cohesive communities. But they are being hampered

by the centralisation of powers in Whitehall, dramatically shrinking resources and a lack of certainty about future funding.

With councils facing a funding gap of £8 billion by 2025, what they need is a new package that places the right power and funding with local communities in order to unlock better opportunities for the areas we live in.

This must include clarity on the continuation of key funding streams, the quantum of resources, the fair funding review and business rates retention, so councils can properly budget for the year ahead and don't have to scale back on much valued and worthwhile services.

Key elements of the LGA's proposed local settlement include:

- an English devolution bill, expanding devolution to areas outside the metropolitan combined authorities
- a local government finance bill, giving councils full local control over council tax and 100 per cent business rates retention
- an education and skills bill, allowing councils to build new schools and deliver employment and skills services locally
- an electoral bill providing protection for councillors and candidates from intimidation
- a domestic abuse bill focused on early intervention and preventative work

- a building safety bill implementing the Hackitt Review's recommendations following the Grenfell Tower fire
- a Spending Review that addresses the funding gaps in key services, including: adult social care; children's services; support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities; nurseries; road repairs; buses and concessionary fares; and public health funding
- policy changes including: publication of the long-delayed Social Care Green Paper; a reformed waste strategy; devolution of Right to Buy and other housing reforms; devolution of transport powers; and an updated air quality policy.

We know the country will look different when we leave the European Union, but Brexit cannot continue to be a distraction from the funding crisis that is pushing fragile local services closer to the edge.

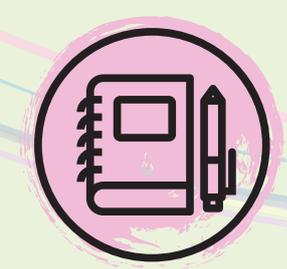
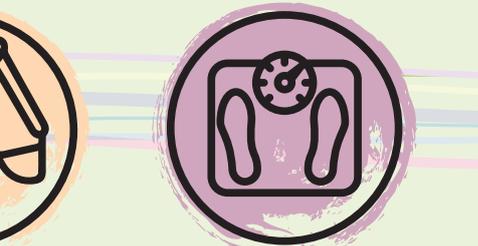
In an uncertain time for this country, certainty for councils and their residents about what powers and resources they will have to support the Government to keep our communities running will become even more fundamental. Councils cannot continue to provide leadership in a system where resources are exhausted and powers and accountability are diffused.

Councils have proven that they are already leaders of place, but it defies logic to think that they can do their best work when they are under insurmountable financial pressure and against the backdrop of a system that is still so disjointed.



This is an overview of the LGA's 'Councils can' report, which will be launched at its annual conference in Bournemouth from 2-4 July. For more information about conference and to book your place, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference). For more information about #CouncilsCan, the LGA's Spending Review campaign, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/councils-can](http://www.local.gov.uk/councils-can)





© ANDREW BAKER/LGA

## See you in Bournemouth...

The LGA's annual conference kicks off in Bournemouth on 2 July, with a host of speakers from across local and national government, other public services, business and the third sector addressing more than 1,400 delegates.

It's not too late to book your place, at [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference). You can also download the conference app via the App Store or Google Play (search for 'LGA events'). And you can follow events on Twitter using #LGAconf19, or by visiting [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

In addition to councillors, elected mayors and chief executives from across local government, this year's conference and fringe speakers also include:

- **James Brokenshire MP**, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (pictured, above)
- **Mark Carney**, Governor of the Bank of England
- **Matt Hancock MP**, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
- **Jo Swinson MP CBE**, Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader and Shadow Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs
- **Dave Prentis**, General Secretary, Unison
- **Cllr Jonathan Bartley**, Co-Leader, Green Party
- **Rishi Sunak MP**, Minister for Local Government
- **Kit Malthouse MP**, Minister for Housing
- **Caroline Nokes MP**, Minister for Immigration
- **Melanie Dawes**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- **Catherine Frances**, Director General, Local Government and Public Services, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- **Niall Dickson**, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation
- **Nick Walkley**, Chief Executive, Homes England
- **Samira Ahmed**, Broadcaster
- **Gordon Seabright**, Chief Executive Officer, Eden Project
- **Polly Billington**, Director, UK100
- **Seyi Akiwowo**, Founder and Executive Director, Glitch
- **Claudia Kenyatta**, Director of Regions, Historic England
- **Jonathan Slater**, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education
- **Graham Archer CBE**, Director, Children's Social Care, Improvement and Learning, Department for Education
- **Detective Chief Inspector Brittany Clarke**, National County Lines Co-ordination Centre, Metropolitan Police
- **Lucy Dacey**, National Programme Manager, Disrupting Exploitation, The Children's Society
- **Jean Templeton**, Chief Executive, St Basils
- **Andrew Hudson**, Chair, Centre for Homelessness Impact
- **Sarah McMonagle**, Director of Communications, Federation of Master Builders
- **Maria Lyle**, Director, RAF Families Federation
- **Natalie Elphicke OBE**, Chief Executive of the Housing and Finance Institute
- **Frédéric Vallier**, Secretary General, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

The success of the UK as a whole in its new relationship with global partners and competitors will rely on the ability of local leaders to encourage inclusive and sustainable growth in local economies, invest in the right infrastructure at the right time and help people and their families meet their full potential.

No-one else can deliver the changes this country needs. A new localism settlement, and the powers and funding to support it, is desperately needed to ensure that the UK is able to compete on a global stage.

The quality of the places we live in depends on our councils. They are the central cog in a machine that brings together all the elements we need to feel secure, safe and fulfilled. In turn, our councils must have mutual support from government to enable them to get on with the job.

Councils have put their offer on the table to government, the new Prime Minister and all our political parties. This is no longer about councils having to prove they can do more – it is now the Government's turn to show it has listened, understood, and cares enough about the millions of people that rely on council services to take action.

It is time for the Government to match residents' and their councils' ambitions.

# Our focus is on the people that matter

We work across adult social care, children's services and the NHS to deliver lasting change which transforms outcomes for people, improves ways of working for staff and realises significant financial savings.



## ACHIEVING RESULTS IN PARTNERSHIP

We work alongside you to make change happen. And we stick with you until the changes become the new normal.

On all our engagements, we put 100% of our fee at risk; we find this provides the basis of a relationship built on trust and confidence.

We have worked with a number of Councils and Health Providers across the country, helping to support the realisation of over £300M of annualised sustainable savings and positively impacting the lives of thousands of people.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE ACHIEVED:

- Reduced the number of people going to residential and nursing beds when they didn't need to by 75%
- Reablement service 18% more effective at increasing independence
- 41% of working age adults successfully moved from residential care to supported living, shared lives and extra care
- Child in need and child protection caseload numbers reduced by 29%
- 230% increase in staff productivity, allowing social workers to spend more time with service users
- 95% of staff prefer the new ways of working that provide a better service and save money
- Up to 15% of net budget delivered as annualised savings

To see how Newton thinking can help you, visit [newtoneurope.com](http://newtoneurope.com)

**NEWTON**



## Rentplus supports low and middle income workers into homeownership through our affordable rent-to-buy option

Rentplus works with housing associations and local authorities to deliver affordable rent-to-buy homes across the country. With £2bn of funds to invest today, we are ready to talk to all partners across England to help more local people become homeowners.



We are the leading provider of affordable rent-to-buy homes, and the only provider gifting a 10 per cent deposit to tenants, when they buy.

Rentplus specifically helps lower/middle income workers, unable to access traditional housebuying products, or to save the large deposits required due to income barriers or debt issues. Most applicants for our rent-to-buy properties work in the public sector.

We offer bespoke strategic partnerships for local authorities to achieve accelerated delivery of affordable housing without the need for a grant.

Visit us on Stand P11



\*MCLG2018 2019. Data accurate at time of publishing

[www.rentplus-uk.com](http://www.rentplus-uk.com)

t: 0330 229 0035 e: [info@rentplus-uk.com](mailto:info@rentplus-uk.com)

f RentplusUK @Rentplus\_UK

♥ Offices in Milton Keynes, Plymouth and London

# Taking the plunge

Despite the tough financial climate, councils continue to come up with innovative and inspiring new ideas for improving the lives of their local residents – some of which will be showcased at the LGA's annual conference

**T**urning innovative ideas into reality takes bold leadership, commitment, support and culture change. And there is no shortage of such ideas being delivered in local government, with more than 40 councils and organisations set to present their projects in the 'Innovation Zone' at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth.

The seventh Innovation Zone, once again sponsored by Newton, will showcase real stuff within a supportive environment, allowing for honest discussion on how councils can continue to explore and share innovative and inspiring new ideas, and demonstrate the difference they have made locally.

Our theme this year is 'taking the plunge', featuring bold innovations and organisations that have not been afraid to try new approaches.

You can hear the story of Harewood Hill Lodge in Darlington, a short break service for children and young people with physical and learning disabilities, which became a 'creative care home' while improving its Ofsted rating to 'outstanding'.

You can find out how data visualisation tools piloted by Kent County Council can help map the pathways of children entering care to enable better decision-making, or how children at Sheffield Council have been helping adults and carers improve placements for all children in care through a board game.

The Innovation Zone will feature a wide variety of interactive workshops, where you can take part in a DIY robotics challenge; meet Lexi the support dog; take a cycle trip round the world without leaving the zone; or see how home sensors and artificial intelligence-based analytics can help manage care.

We will also be tackling some key questions for local government. The first session in the Innovation Zone will tackle racial inequality head on, with a discussion from the London Borough of Hackney about its 'Improving outcomes for young black men' project.



Mayor Dave Hodgson is Vice-Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

We have a practical session on helping local government staff and others in the sector who also have caring responsibilities. Another hot topic is the environment, with an example from Leeds on what the sector can do to increase recycling efforts, plus a session on tackling extreme weather through the EU's blue-green infrastructure project in Kent and Enfield.

We will also be launching our new Transformation and Innovation Exchange (TIEx) – an interactive space where councils can come together to share learning and support each other to continue delivering value for money and better outcomes for communities. Come along to the launch at

## In the zone

The Innovation Zone is part of the LGA's ongoing innovation and improvement work, including:

- more than 1,100 council case studies
- our Design in the Public Sector programme, equipping councils with design skills and techniques to apply to service challenges
- our behavioural insights programme
- our new Transformation and Innovation Exchange.

You can find out more at [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer) or access our latest weekly case studies on Twitter, at @LGAcomms and #InnovateTuesday.

6pm on Wednesday 3 July to find out more.

If you have your own exciting idea or innovation to share, you can get involved in the Innovation Zone's open mic session, by 'taking the plunge' and speaking on an issue you care about. Join us on Thursday 4 July to hear fellow councillors' take on innovation, solving local challenges or exploring new possibilities.

We look forward to meeting you at this year's Innovation Zone.

- To view the full Innovation Zone programme and to book a place at the LGA's annual conference, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference). Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtags #LGAconf19 and #LGAIZ



Last year's Innovation Zone

# Profit with a purpose



Councillor Joy Allen is the LGA's Lead Member for Commercialisation

**T**hroughout the history of the public sector, local government has always used commercial approaches to meet local challenges head on.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, councils invested in commercial activity across local areas to create jobs, improve living standards, and generate income to reinvest back into local services. For example, back in the 1800s, Manchester Police and Manchester Council opened the city's first gas works, enabling the rollout of street lights and making the city safer.

Fast forward to today, and we can see this commercial activity is still alive and well. After years of reductions in government grants, many councils are exploring how they can adopt commercial activity to stimulate local economies, increase jobs and deliver social value for their residents.

In our 'Enterprising councils' report, we explored how councils are increasingly developing innovative commercial solutions to increase income while improving outcomes for local residents.

Following positive feedback, we have now developed our latest guidance, 'Profit with a purpose', which focuses on how councils can deliver social value through their commercial activity.

The guidance is structured to take you through a considered approach to ensuring commercial activity drives social value. It supports you to face the challenge of how to undertake commercial activity and achieve greater value for the public purse in ways that better meet society's needs and improve outcomes for people and communities.

A number of short case studies are

The LGA has launched new guidance on how to ensure social value is at the heart of councils' commercial activities



detailed to highlight some of the innovative commercial practice already achieving results for communities, by embedding social value in their contracts, targets and practices.

For example, the City of Wolverhampton's WV Living house building company aims to tackle housing sites that the private sale and rental market were not delivering on.

To ensure the company's value goes beyond the bricks and mortar, the firm builds into its contracts that selected suppliers must employ local people and take on apprentices, to build up skills within the construction trades and provide economic growth and jobs for local communities.

Cityserve, Birmingham City Council's schools trading service, puts local children at the heart of the business. For example, Cityserve's catering offer has intended

outcomes relating to reducing obesity and promoting healthy eating.

This means it not only delivers a school catering service, which provides around 50,000 school meals to around 220 schools a day, it also engages with children over menu design and what foods they wish to eat.

It also delivers prevention activities via interactive 'life' skills training, such as cooking classes where children cook healthy recipes as well as learning about healthy food choices, which helps children gain transferable skills to be taken home and shared with their families.

The report also has specific chapters on embedding social value in governance of alternative service delivery vehicles, the role of procurement in contracting services that deliver social value, and how to contract and performance manage social value through your service providers.

We hope 'Profit with a purpose' will help your council generate much needed income to protect vital frontline services, while also contributing to social value – jobs, skills and growth – in your area.



Please visit [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications) to download 'Profit with a purpose'. **A workshop with the same title will be taking place on Tuesday 2 July in Bournemouth, at the LGA's annual conference.** See [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference) for more information, and to book your place

“We liked the reassurance of **back-up**. If one site goes down, the others can help.”

**Emma Quest**

Community Links Services Manager

**Horsham District Council**

**WE PARTNER WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SOLVE YOUR TELECARE WORRIES.**

With three emergency resolution centres, we offer the bullet-proof service and security you'd expect from a life-saving service. We offer peace of mind to ten district councils, Age UK and over 70,000 alarm users.

Exclusive telecare provider to  **ageUK**



**PPP Taking Care**

# Creating Tomorrow Together

**2018** in focus

- EBITDA up 1.7% to **£48m**
- Net assets increased by 14% to **£136m**
- Profit (PBT) up 1% to **£35.9m**
- £1.601bn** turnover
- Cash **£114.2m**
- Record forward order book: **£5.4bn** (2017: £5.1bn)

**136** 'Building Futures' programmes helped unemployed adults into work

**300** people were supported through the programme in 2018, with 70% moving into education, employment or training.

**1,500** participants helped since 2006

**3,863** people (at December 2018)

**177** Management Trainees and Apprentices

**31.8 million** hours worked

**7,000+** new homes under construction

Accident Frequency Rate down 25% from 2017 at 0.035 – a **70%** drop over five years

**77%** reduction in lost time injuries reported over five years (29% reduction on 2017)

**£360,000** donated to The Prince's Trust over 4-year partnership

Managed facilities in **350+** non-residential buildings

**500,000+** homes maintained in the social housing sector

**30%** reduction in RIDDOR injuries from 2017

Industry-leading health and safety performance –

Accident incidence rate **77%** below Construction industry average

(HSE report 2017/18)

**£5.5m** spent with Social Enterprises (2017: £2.7m)

**Over 5,000 hours** volunteered by our people at more than 60 projects in our communities

# The chief executives of the future?

## The four finalists in the LGA's annual Local Government Challenge have been named, as the contest nears its conclusion

**N**ow in its 10th year, the Local Government Challenge seeks out the best and brightest local government officers to compete in a series of real-life challenges at councils around the country.

In **first 635**, we introduced the 10 contestants and the first three challenges of 2019. Here, we have an update on the last two challenges and reveal the top four contestants going through to the final at the LGA's annual conference in July.

Isle of Wight Council hosted the penultimate 2019 Challenge, and the first on an island. With demand for holiday and retirement homes rising, the council faces a shortage of affordable homes and increased homelessness. The challenge? Increasing access to temporary accommodation for residents in need and delivering a pathway from homelessness to housing.

Team Thrive's #daringtocare strategy reframed homelessness as relevant to everyone, with an 'Opening Doors' programme to encourage residents to offer space in their primary or second homes in return for annual council tax reductions.

Team Ignite's 'Turning Tides' programme focused on prevention, with a partnership board including people with current or past experience of homelessness, and an app to donate money and match unwanted items to vulnerable people in need.

The results were not unanimous, but it was Thrive's approach that won them the fourth challenge.

The final challenge was hosted by Luton Council – the only single council to own an airport outright. Through its airport company, the council is investing £225 million in the Luton DART (Direct Air-Rail Transport) which will transfer passengers between Luton Airport Parkway station and the airport terminal in just over three minutes.

The challenge was to devise a marketing campaign using Luton DART to drive the airport's market share growth within the London and South East aviation system.

Team Ignite's campaign aimed to change misconceptions of Luton Airport. Their 'Closer, Easier and More than you think' strategy was a bold and provocative approach that directly challenged people's views of proximity, ease of access, comfort and quality with the new reality.

Team Thrive's 'Fly Luton' campaign aimed to make Luton the airport of choice for business and leisure travellers, and to take the strain away from Luton's roads by encouraging travel to the airport by train.

The judging panel felt the approach of Team Ignite (pictured below) edged them to victory, but elements of both teams' work could be taken forward by Luton.

After competing in five challenges between January and June, the 10 contestants were whittled down to four finalists – Hollie Stone (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham), Rob Comber (Kent County

Council), Sarah Thistlethwaite (Kirklees Council), and Matthew Snelling (London Borough of Merton).

The quartet will attend the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth in July to pitch their proposals for the £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart scholarship to conference delegates and a panel of judges from the LGA, Kent and Essex County Councils, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Municipal Journal, and our sponsors, Wates.

The LGA would like to thank Wates; the members and officers at the host councils who helped make the five outstanding challenges a success; and all the contestants for their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment – our four finalists, plus Adam Wassell (Gloucester City Council), Bob Allen (Wigan Council), Celia Prado-Teeling (Cherwell District Council), Emily Kindred (Wigan Council), Katy Smith (Kent County Council), and Susie Grounds (London Borough of Merton).

**i** The results of the 2019 Local Government Challenge will be announced at a reception at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth at 6pm on Wednesday 3 July. See [www.local.gov.uk/lg-challenge](http://www.local.gov.uk/lg-challenge) for more about the competition



Team Ignite, the winners of the challenge hosted by Luton Council. From left, Celia Prado-Teeling, Hollie Stone, Bob Allen and Matthew Snelling

# Council housing centenary

As part of its #CouncilsCan campaign, the LGA is celebrating 100 years of council housing and promoting the role of councils in leading future house building



**A**lmost 100 years ago, the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act 1919 placed a duty on local authorities to “consider the needs of their area with respect to the provision of houses for the working classes”.

The end of World War I had created a huge demand for ‘homes fit for heroes’ in towns across Britain. And the ambitious Housing Act – which became known as the Addison Act, after its author, Dr Christopher Addison, the Minister of Health – promised government subsidies to help finance the building of 500,000 houses within three years.

By 1921, the post-war crisis had passed and the programme was axed, leading to around only 213,000 houses being built under the Addison Act.

Nevertheless, the Act marked the start of a period of large-scale council house building, which continued during the inter-war and post-war years, supported by other Acts of Parliament.

In the 100 years since the Addison Act, councils have built more than five million properties, helping millions of families find a secure place they can call home.

The number of council homes built has

gone up and down over the past century. Numbers peaked in the 1950s, with an average 147,000 homes a year, and dipped to their lowest in the 2000s, when councils were building an average of just 224 a year. Last year, councils built 2,640 houses.

The introduction of ‘Right to Buy’ in 1980 led to councils selling houses for significantly less than their value, making it unaffordable to replace them all.

In the past six years alone, more than 60,000 homes have been sold off under Right to Buy at, on average, half the market rate, leaving councils with enough funding to build or buy just 14,000 new homes to replace them.

This leaves a shortfall of 46,000 homes that could have provided secure, affordable housing for the most vulnerable in society.

The LGA continues to call for reforms of Right to Buy – particularly for local authorities to be able to keep 100 per cent of all council

house sales receipts and to have the ability to set Right to Buy discounts locally to reflect community needs.

However, in October 2018, after years of LGA campaigning, the Government did announce it would scrap the housing revenue account borrowing cap – allowing stock-owning councils to borrow against their housing assets to build more homes.

In an LGA survey published earlier this year, 94 per cent of housing stock-owning councils said they would use the new powers to accelerate or increase their house building programmes to build homes desperately needed in their communities.

But 92 per cent of councils were clear that more government support is needed if councils are to truly resume their historic role as major house builders and reverse the decline in social housing.

Few disagree about the need for more housing, of all types and tenures. Because of



If you would like to hear more views on the future of council housing or see more of the content we have around our #CouncilHousing100 campaign please visit [www.local.gov.uk/councilhousing100](http://www.local.gov.uk/councilhousing100)



Council housing being built in Waltham Forest

*“In the 100 years since the Addison Act, councils have built more than five million properties, helping millions of families find a secure place they can call home”*

the lack of social and affordable homes being built, more and more individuals and families find themselves pushed into an often more expensive and less secure private rented sector. As a result, the housing benefit bill paid to private landlords has more than doubled since the early 2000s.

Councils are now having to house more than 200,000 homeless people in temporary accommodation, with thousands of rough sleepers living on the streets and 1.2 million households on social housing waiting lists.

The appetite for councils to build is there, but how do we get it done? What is the future for council housing?

The official centenary of the Addison Act is on 31 July, when the LGA will be hosting a social media campaign to showcase residents’ thoughts on council housing, and generate some debate around the future of council housing and how it should be delivered.

We are asking councils to get involved and exhibit their Addison Act materials. Councils can join in the conversation by using #CouncilHousing100 on Twitter.

We have also been hearing from academics, housing sector experts and politicians about their thoughts on how they see council housing in the future – see right for some of their responses, and please visit [www.local.gov.uk/councilhousing100](http://www.local.gov.uk/councilhousing100) to hear more views about the future of housing.

The last time the country built more than 250,000 homes in a year, in the 1970s, councils built around 40 per cent of them. A genuine renaissance in council house building is the only way to boost housing supply, help families struggling to meet housing costs, provide good quality homes to rent, reduce homelessness and tackle the housing waiting lists many councils have.

## The future of council housing

*“Council housing is one of the biggest and most important services that councils deliver. Decent, safe, secure homes are the perfect foundation for children at the start of their lives and that affects the cost of every other service that we deliver.*

*“If a house isn’t safe, secure and decent, education would be more expensive, [dealing with] crime and disorder would be more expensive and social care would be more expensive, so it goes to the heart of everything councils do. The more of it we can get delivered, the better.”*

**Lord Gary Porter, LGA Chairman**

*“The most important thing is that these new homes should be social rented at levels that people can genuinely afford – not the so-called affordable rents pushed by recent governments, not help to buy, and not shared ownership, which are all expensive options catering to the better off. This also has the benefit of cutting the soaring housing benefit bill.*

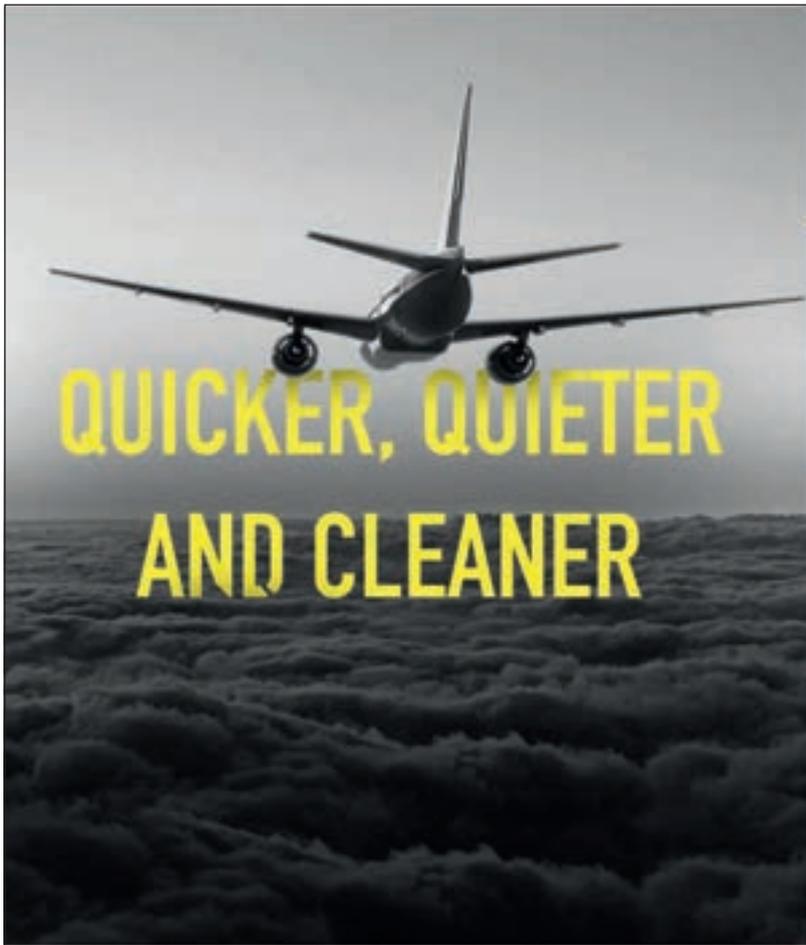
*“More council housing, reaching more of the 1.2 million on waiting lists, will also create the mixed communities that are the goal of current social policy, rather than confining social homes to the most needy or most vulnerable. We can go forward by looking back to the high-value deals and best practice of the past.”*

**John Boughton, author of ‘Municipal dreams: the rise and fall of council housing’**

*“I believe we should be as proud of social housing as we are of our NHS and our education system. I also think it should be for anybody who wants to live there, but we need a lot more of it for that to happen. We need a long-term ambition for social housing that offers affordable choice and opportunity.*

*“We know we need 90,000 new homes at social rents, the lowest rents each year. Government currently has a £51 billion budget for housing and only 21 per cent is earmarked for affordable housing. We think affordable housing should have a much fairer slice of the cake.”*

**Melanie Rees, Head of Policy and External Affairs, Chartered Institute for Housing**



## OUR FUTURE SKIES

Just like our roads and railways, we need to modernise our airspace – our infrastructure in the sky – to keep people moving as efficiently as possible while limiting the environmental impact and managing noise better.

The UK's airspace handles around 2.5 million flights a year, carrying over 292 million passengers. Government forecasts tell us that by 2030 there will be 355 million passengers on 3.25 million flights. To manage this increasing demand, we need to modernise our skies. If we don't, delays faced by passengers are likely to soar, with one in three flights being delayed by half an hour or more by 2030.

For more information, visit [www.ourfutureskies.uk](http://www.ourfutureskies.uk)



### Urban Mobility Partnership

#### Who we are...

The Urban Mobility Partnership (UMP) is a ground breaking new transport partnership responsible for over a billion consumer journeys a year. It aims to discuss and promote key issues around the future of urban mobility. This is a multi-modal partnership representing all key transport modes – with Stagecoach Group representing the bus, coach, rail and tram modes, Enterprise

Holdings representing the car mode as founding members and Bosch as one of the leading innovators in clean air solutions. Nextbike and Brompton Bike Hire are UMP's first partner organisation and will represent the views of the bikeshare community. Foot Anstey have joined the partnership and bring with them invaluable legal insight for mobility planning and sustainable transport policy.

Visit us at [www.ump.org.uk](http://www.ump.org.uk)

If you would like to know more about our key policy proposals: mobility credits, targeting greyfleet and planning for mobility please visit us at [www.ump.org.uk](http://www.ump.org.uk)

#### Our partners



# Keeping residents safe

The Government is consulting on changes to how building safety is regulated, following the Grenfell Tower fire two years ago



Lord Porter  
is Chairman of the LGA



The recent fire at a six-storey block of flats in east London has demonstrated the enormous amount of work that still needs to be done to ensure people can sleep safely at night in all types of homes across the country.

Since the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the LGA has made the case for fundamental reform of our broken building regulations system. So we were pleased to see the Government's recent launch of a consultation on how to implement the recommendations made by Dame Judith Hackitt.

The proposals in the consultation do reflect many of the calls we have made, but there is still work to do to drive these reforms forward – and this must happen as soon as possible. For example, there are many buildings outside of the current scope of the reforms – such as hospitals, care homes and residential schools – which should be protected in the same way.

Designers, developers, product manufacturers and building owners need to be given clear duties in relation to building safety and clear guidance on those duties. The new system needs to be funded properly and residents must be able to raise concerns, and know they will be listened to.

While work has begun on reforms to

improve the safety of blocks above 18 metres in height, the fire in Barking, east London, in early June, showed that buildings under 18 metres have similar safety issues. We must avoid creating a two-tier system that delivers safety in high-risk buildings at the expense of residents elsewhere.

The consultation – which is open until the end of July – promises new powers for regulators, backed by effective sanctions. Building owners will have to demonstrate that high-risk buildings are safe at the design and construction stages, and throughout their occupation, including during and after refurbishment.

A new competence regime will cover the construction industry and building management, and new bodies will set national standards for essential construction products and provide oversight of the regulatory system. Most importantly, new measures will ensure that residents' concerns are listened to and acted upon.

The LGA has influenced these proposals and supports them in general, but it is vital that a risk-based approach to regulation is introduced. As these proposals are turned into legislation, we will work to ensure that regulation remains locally accountable and

that regulators are able to treat buildings holistically – in particular, where residential blocks sit above retail or commercial premises.

The new system will need to be funded properly if residents are to be kept safe, and that funding will need to include transitional costs, such as increased provision of fire engineering capacity in the workforce.

It is now just over two years since the Grenfell Tower fire cost at least 72 lives and began to shed light on the appalling and unacceptable approach to safety in some parts of the building industry in recent years.

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower must never be allowed to happen again. We look forward to continuing to work with the Government to deliver the much-needed reforms to ensure residents are safe, and feel safe.



**The Government's consultation on building safety is open until 31 July at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-a-safer-future-proposals-for-reform-of-the-building-safety-regulatory-system](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-a-safer-future-proposals-for-reform-of-the-building-safety-regulatory-system). To further inform the LGA's work in this area, please share your consultation responses with us by emailing [charles.loft@local.gov.uk](mailto:charles.loft@local.gov.uk), and contact him if you have any questions. You can also learn about what other councils are doing to respond to the upcoming changes by joining our online Building Safety Knowledge Hub – sign up at [www.khub.net](http://www.khub.net)**

*“We must avoid creating a two-tier system that delivers safety in high-risk buildings at the expense of residents elsewhere”*



Find us at stand P77



# More than just a landlord.

Futures Housing Group is a growing, ambitious housing association which manages around 10,000 homes throughout the East Midlands.

We're award winning, proud holders of Investors in People Gold accreditation and one of our region's top 100 companies.



### We Build.

We own Limehouse, a commercial development company that provides quality new homes for sale, rent or shared ownership;



### We Care.

We own Beep Assist, a commercial brand that helps people live independently through smart technology and a human touch;



### We Open Doors.

We co-own Access Training, a top performing further education provider which helps people gain the skills they need for the jobs they want.

If you share our passion for creating homes and opportunities for people, get in touch with Marcus Keys, Group Director of Growth and Transformation, at [marcus.keys@futureshg.co.uk](mailto:marcus.keys@futureshg.co.uk).

[www.futureshg.co.uk](http://www.futureshg.co.uk) [@futures\\_hg](https://twitter.com/futures_hg) [in](https://www.linkedin.com/company/futures-housing-group) futures-housing-group

#### ADVERTORIAL



John De La Rue, Service development director for off-site revenues at Capita, explores;

## In the backdrop of belt-tightening, how can local authorities maximise collections and streamline processes?

Making the most of DWP funding for Verify Earning and Pensions ensures access to additional income without disrupting local service delivery.

With a 40% reduction in central funding many local authorities are paring back services to the statutory minimum, notwithstanding the risks of legal challenges or the impact of cuts on vulnerable residents. Revenues and benefits are becoming increasingly high profile against this backdrop of belt-tightening with challenges to maximise collection and make the best use of resources, as housing benefit caseloads migrate to Universal Credit.

Councils are therefore juggling budgetary pressures with increasing debt, much of it of low value and owed by taxpayers in already straitened circumstances. The timetable for Universal Credit rollout just adds further uncertainty to future plans.

Service providers like Capita have well established solutions for providing processing resilience from shared service centres but we are finding an increased demand for longer-term relationships for a range of solutions, as local authorities realign their Revenues and Benefits Services. Making the most of DWP funding for Verify Earning and Pensions (VEP) activity is an example of this as it ensures access to additional income without disrupting local service delivery.

This is a fully managed end-to-end solution that deals with VEP alerts, reassessments and associated queries provided by experienced assessment staff from our network of processing centres.

This is predicated on the greater capacity and flexibility Capita has in delivering services to multiple local authorities but also the investment in developing an optimised approach that makes the most of the funding available and simplifies the process for the customer. We also have the advantage of dedicated policy resources who ensure consistency in the treatment of earnings which can often cause delays and confusion for assessors and claimants in determining Housing benefit/council tax support entitlement (CTS).

This paves the way for a more streamlined approach to council tax recovery and the assessment of CTS changes, as Universal Credit has been designed to respond dynamically to fluctuations in income for low earners.



To find out more how Capita can support your local authority, please email us at [John.Delarue@capita.co.uk](mailto:John.Delarue@capita.co.uk)

# Peer support

## The LGA and the wider local government family can help if your council needs support to overcome weaknesses and improve services to residents

Clr Chris Read became leader of Rotherham Council in March 2015, the same week as government-appointed commissioners arrived following two reports that uncovered significant council failings that contributed to child sexual exploitation.

“At the time I described us as the Millwall of local government”, reflects Clr Read, in an interview in a new report on the impact of sector-led improvement (SLI) in local government.

SLI is the locally accountable approach to improvement put in place by local authorities and the LGA, following the abolition of the previous national performance framework. The LGA’s role is to provide tools and support to help improve performance.

Clr Read says the early support his council received from the LGA felt like the arrival of the cavalry: “They created the structure for proper help and support.”

The mentoring support he received was particularly important. “It is the one to one support for me that I remember most clearly. Just having somebody at the end of the phone became really important – somebody who could say ‘yeah, I think you are doing that right...not sure about that.’”

It was a new experience for him, “and, actually, when we were in that kind of hole, much as that support is welcome, it’s also difficult to accept”.

Mentoring is something that he now recommends to other leaders. “It’s not somebody else coming in and doing the job for you. And you’ve always got to feel free to reject the advice...But having somebody who’s available to you, who you can have a frank conversation with...I think that, perhaps particularly for leaders, is really valuable.”

Reflecting on the state of the council he inherited, Clr Read said that Rotherham had become isolated. “We didn’t have anything to compare to, we weren’t engaged with the rest of local government, we didn’t know what good looked like, we didn’t know what was a reasonable standard.”

The peer support Rotherham received meant that Clr Read and his colleagues “had lots of comparative information across the whole range of council services... We

had a real sense of direction of what we were trying to do and what that might look like.”

For him, a real strength of the peer support was that it was really tangible. It did not set a gold standard, but the message was “we can see where you are, you’re a bit better at this, you’re a bit worse at that, the next thing you should try to do is this.”

Government intervention in Rotherham formally came to an end in March 2019, with the former commissioners saying that the

pace of improvement across the council had exceeded their expectations.

Today, Clr Read says: “It’s about how do we maintain that improvement. It’s much less intense. But it’s about having that network of people and friends who help us and we help them. That’s how we look at it now.”

He has subsequently been a member of LGA peer challenge teams, giving support to other councils.

“That was absolutely fascinating,” he says of his first visit. “It was brilliant. It was a really good week, to go in, to be able to understand where someone else was, hopefully to impart some of the things that I’ve learnt doing this job, but also to pick up things that I could bring back here. I want to do more of that personally.”

*“Just having somebody at the end of the phone became really important”*



Rotherham High Street



To find out more about the LGA’s sector-led improvement offer, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/sector-led-improvement](http://www.local.gov.uk/sector-led-improvement). ‘Rising to the challenge: lessons of sector-led improvement in local government’, featuring interviews with leaders and chief executives from 18 councils which have received LGA improvement support, is available at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications)

# interview

## Making a difference

**Lord Gary Porter** is standing down as Chairman of the LGA after four years in post. He talks to **first** about the ups and downs of a turbulent time in local government



### **You love being LGA chairman. Why?**

Every day's different. We don't know what's coming down the line. Someone, somewhere will need our help.

It's knowing that we make a difference. I get to see things when they start and I'm lucky enough to still be hanging around by the time we've finished it, to see how much better it looks than it could have.

It's also knowing the stuff that's going on under the radar, looking at issues that are turning up in councils that never actually see the light of day because the LGA has been involved in doing something about staving off that problem.

### **What was your plan when you started?**

I wanted to rebuild a decent, working relationship with the Government – one where we could be honest with them and firm when necessary, but still be trusted, so that, if we were moaning properly, they would give us the cash if we needed it. I think I've got away with doing that mostly. They're still talking to us.

### **What's changed in your four years as chairman?**

We've got a hell of a lot less cash than we had four years ago – but councils have managed to keep everything going. Services haven't fallen away. I still think our reputation with the public has been undersold on the basis that we're delivering a lot more for a hell of a lot less now. If people could really understand the extent of that, our reputation would be even higher than it is.

### **What events have shaped your chairmanship?**

Half of my chairmanship has been Grenfell – and that's brought out the worst of what we do and the best. It's been life-changing, really.

The weirdest one, though, is that – for three out of my four years – the biggest subject that's consumed the country, Brexit, is something on which the LGA can't express an opinion. Despite that, we've got more external recognition than we've ever had and dominated quite a bit of the news agenda.

The decision to stay neutral was the right

© ANDREW BAKER/LGA



*“I wanted to rebuild a decent, working relationship with the Government”*

one. It's allowed us to move through this agenda without being tarnished by it from either side.

#### **What is your proudest achievement?**

There have been loads, but our big one is winning the scrapping of the housing revenue account cap. I realised when I was a junior member on the LGA's housing board that the biggest stumbling block for council house building was that cap. So when the Prime Minister made the announcement at last year's party conference, there was a little tear in my eye.

It's not because I love housing – which I do – but every other service that we touch will be better because of that freedom. Decent housing means social care is less of a burden, crime and disorder is less of a problem, education is less of a burden. It means kids growing up in safe, secure and affordable homes, where their parents are not spending all their money on paying the rent; and people take more pride in an area if they've got a bit of money left over each week to spend on some nice things, rather than just chucking it all at a landlord.

There's a chance to make the world better out of that – and that's good. We did that. No LGA, no reform.

#### **What is your biggest regret?**

The icing on the cake would have been to get the reforms to Right to Buy we've been after, alongside the win on the housing borrowing cap. We don't want to scrap Right to Buy, but to regulate it better at a local level, and retain all the cash it generates.

Devolution is probably the biggest disappointment. I wasn't able to cut through

to get the freedoms that we needed to make that work properly. I'm gutted with the sector, as well as the Government. We walked away from having directly elected mayors – we should have found a way of getting past that, if that was the price. It would have been a price worth paying if the devo deal was the right one.

#### **What does the future hold for local government?**

Once Brexit is sorted out, it depends who's in government really. I worry about devolution getting back on the agenda, but the price for it being even higher than it was under the mayoral model. Regardless of who wins the next election, there's strong potential for structural reform. I worry that it will be a 'done to', not a 'done with'; it will be a top-down, 'sorry, you're all doing this; you'll all become unitaries at 400,000 populations, and that's it'.

#### **Has it been difficult to work on a cross-party basis?**

As Conservative group leader, all I had to do was worry about the blue team. I think some of the bigger Labour leaders were dubious about me taking over as chairman. But, on a day-to-day basis, there isn't a massive difference between what the different political groups want.

There are nuances about how they want to achieve stuff, but the vast majority of people we work with, and for, just want to get the thing done in the best way possible. It's pretty easy to walk through on a cross-party line as soon as you stop looking at people with coloured rosettes on, and view them as people who care.

#### **What advice would you give your successor?**

Work hard at relationships – that's the most important thing. Staff and members in the LGA. Across party lines. Treat them all the same, so everybody knows you're relatively fair with it.

It's important the LGA is based near Westminster, in the middle of what's going on. We get a better inside track on some things than we used to, and the working relationship with more parliamentarians and civil servants is stronger now.

But, remember, we're not only in London. Other people have different experiences on a day-by-day basis, and some of the stuff we get engrossed in is invisible to people in the shires.

Don't forget you're a leader of a place as well as chairman of the LGA. Don't lose sight of what's going on in the place.

#### **How important has your experience as a district council leader been?**

That's everything you start from. My experience on the ground is this: if only the Government would do this other thing, my life would be much easier. How do I make that happen? They're not going to listen to me as a district leader, but they'll listen to us as the LGA.

#### **What are you going to do next?**

Technically, it's called a mixed portfolio. Odds and sods, basically. I have no massive career plan. If projects come up that I think look interesting, I'll do that. I got into politics to be in local government, not national government. I've no appetite for being any more involved in Westminster than I already am. I will definitely still be around the sector.

# SECOND-HAND GOODS NO SECOND CHANCES?

Did you know that electricity causes over half of the fires in UK homes? From 2015-2016, they led to 1,380 deaths and injuries- an average of 27 each week, or 4 a day<sup>i</sup>.

Electrical Safety First is the leading UK charity committed to reducing fires, deaths and accidents arising from electricity.

As a consumer-focused charity, we run major media campaigns to raise public awareness of issues ranging from 'rogue' traders and the dangers of counterfeits and substandard electrical goods, to safely charging an electric car.

In the 21st Century, electrical safety involves a 360° approach, so we work with key stakeholders to effect change in consumer behaviour, disseminate industry best practice and improve product safety. To help establish safety standards, we sit on a range of national and international regulatory committees and we provide the secretariat for the APPG for Home Electrical Safety – a platform for raising awareness and change on key issues, including online sales and recall effectiveness.

Our consumer protection activities also include product testing, policy analysis and consumer research. So we understand that everyone wants to get 'a good deal', particularly if money is tight. But bargain hunters can put their lives – and their homes – in danger when buying second-hand electrical goods. Unlike most other pre-used items, such as clothes or accessories, second-hand electrical goods can present specific risks that can have devastating consequences. While the damage to properties might be estimated in millions, the personal cost is incalculable.

Today the market for second-hand goods is booming, fuelled by austerity, environmental concerns and the ease of online purchase. Yet there is little real protection for consumers when buying from an online private seller. The requirements of the Consumer Rights Act relating to goods being of 'satisfactory quality' and 'fit for purpose' no longer apply. Instead, there is greater reliance on the clause regarding them being 'as described'. There's no obligation on the seller to disclose any faults, but misrepresenting goods isn't allowed. Our initial research<sup>ii</sup> indicates that many people think they are buying from an online platform- a recognised 'business' - rather than an individual.

<sup>i</sup> 4,732 accidental domestic fires caused by faulty appliances and leads where the source of ignition was electric. England: Home Office Fire Statistics on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services. Figures from financial year 2016/17. Accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#incident-level-datasets>.

Wales: StatsWales statistics on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services. Figures from financial year 2016/17. Accessible at: <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Community-Safety/Fire-incidents/Fires-and-False-Alarms/accidentalprimaryfires-by-cause-sourceignition>

Scotland: Freedom of Information request sent to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, June 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> Hot Bargains, Killer Deals – The Problem with Second-Hand Electrical Goods: ESF and The Social Futures Institute Teeside University.

<sup>iii</sup> Safer Products, Better Business – A 360° Approach to Product Safety – report by ESF

### TOP TIPS ...

1

**Always check and never buy** a recalled product – take a look at our recalled products list at: <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/>

2

**Try to avoid** buying a second-hand electrical product from an individual private seller, as your legal rights are minimal. But if you do, always check that the item has been PAT tested by a competent person.

3

**Do you trust the seller** – are they an established and reputable business seller?

4

**Check reviews if buying online** – do they have a good reputation?

5

**Is the item complete?** - Does it come with instructions and all parts?

6

**Finally – is it safe to buy?** Remember, if they won't say – walk away



Electrical Safety First,  
45 Great Guildford Street,  
London SE1 0ES

# comment

## Democracy that is closer to home



Dr Jess Garland is Director of Policy and Research at the Electoral Reform Society

### We need a new approach to government in the UK that puts citizens at the centre.

Democracy works better when it is closer to home. Surveys consistently show that people are more trusting of their representatives and more engaged in politics when it is local.

But at the national level, many are losing their faith in politics and feel distant from decision-making. Our recent polling shows that two-thirds of people (67 per cent) feel they have few or no opportunities to inform and influence the decisions made by MPs at Westminster – and only 4 per cent feel they have a lot of opportunities.

In a newly published report, 'Westminster beyond Brexit: ending the politics of division', we set out a vision for how we can achieve a flourishing democracy where power is dispersed across political institutions and citizens are empowered and engaged.

We make the case that embedding deliberative democratic processes – long and careful discussion by citizens in order to make decisions – can re-engage people with local democracy. These processes can ensure citizens are informed, are able to hear each other's views in a reflective and respectful environment, and allow people to adopt more nuanced positions on the issues at hand, with a better understanding of the trade-offs inherent in any given decision.

Citizen involvement in



constitutional change – including devolution and decentralisation – is necessary to ensure the legitimacy of our institutional set-up and democracy more broadly. This means creating and investing in spaces that allow for direct citizen input, working alongside political representatives.

According to the Hansard Society, 66 per cent of people think most big issues facing the country today do not have clear solutions – so coming together to debate and discuss is even more necessary. We need to give people opportunities to debate their constitutional future, and to create forums whereby people can deliberate together, alongside their representatives.

Research shows that people are more likely to trust decisions made by fellow citizens with whom they can identify and who are more likely to share their interests and concerns.

Forms of deliberative democracy are now being used more frequently around the world as a way of providing for citizen input in the policy-making process, such as the recent constitutional process in Ireland.

Constitutional conventions and citizens' assemblies are two of the most well-known deliberative formats, but there are other ways for people to be involved in decision-making at the local and sub-national levels.

Participatory models are already flourishing at the local level, with many councils using participatory budgeting and setting up citizens' assemblies on local issues. Unfortunately, the Government plans to shelve all but three of eight local citizens' assemblies proposed last summer – keeping only the least controversial projects on the

*“Participatory models are already flourishing, with many councils using participatory budgeting and setting up citizens' assemblies on local issues”*

table. Instead we should be looking to citizens' assemblies to consider the big constitutional questions we face, including how we might rebalance power across our democratic institutions.

England remains one of the most centralised nations in Europe. Devolution within England has been limited and piecemeal, without a comprehensive, long-term plan to give genuine political representation to citizens.

We need to open up the debate about the UK's democratic future, including England and the place of local government, and give citizens a genuine say in the future of their country and communities. Embedding deliberative practices can build a more vibrant and engaging politics and help to reinvigorate the debate about the future of our democracy.



You can find out more about the Electoral Reform Society and read 'Westminster beyond Brexit: ending the politics of division' at [www.electoral-reform.org.uk](http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk)

## group leaders' comments

### A champion of local government

*“I am delighted that Conservative councillors are rightly receiving well-deserved public recognition for their hard work and dedication”*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing LGA Chairman, Lord Porter, for all that he has achieved for local government over the past four years.

As the leader of South Holland District Council, Chairman of the District Councils' Network, Chairman of the Conservative Councillors' Association, Leader of the LGA Conservative Group and, most recently, LGA Chairman, Gary has been a champion of local government in Lincolnshire, within the Conservative Party and in cross-party, non-partisan national roles.

The contacts he has formed at the highest levels of government have been instrumental in securing the LGA's biggest 'wins' over the past

four years, including the removal of the housing revenue account borrowing cap, extra funding for social care, and improvements to building safety in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, to name but a few.

Those of us who have worked with Gary at the LGA feel honoured to have had the opportunity to do so, and wish him all the best for the future.

I would also like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Conservative colleagues who were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List: Tim Warren, the former Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council, who was made a CBE; and Cllr David Williams, from the London Borough of Merton, and Cllr Keith



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

Baker, from Wokingham Borough Council, both of whom were made MBEs.

I am delighted that Conservative councillors are rightly receiving such well-deserved public recognition for their hard work and dedication.

Finally, I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth.

The Conservative Group office has organised three group meetings and our dinner will be held on Wednesday 3 July from 7.30pm onwards. Tickets for this can be obtained from the LGA Conservative Group stand, where you can also meet our staff and pick up various goodies.

## chairman's comment

### Delivering for local residents



Lord Porter is Chairman of the LGA

I am looking forward to seeing many of you in Bournemouth from 2-4 July, at the LGA's annual conference.

It is dusty there, so I may well have a tear in my eye. It will have nothing to do with handing over to my successor as LGA chairman, at our annual general meeting. I have loved this job; every day has been different, and it has been an absolute honour to represent local government, and to help make a difference on behalf of the sector.

The LGA has helped secure many 'wins' and successes over the past four years, from the extra £2 billion for adult social

care in the 2017 Spring Budget to changes to key legislation and policy.

But I am most proud that we finally got the Government to scrap the housing borrowing cap, so councils can borrow against their existing housing assets to build more homes.

None of this would have been possible without the support I have received from the LGA's staff and senior elected members, and their hard work on behalf of local government.

But it would also have been impossible without you, our members, and the evidence and advice you have provided so that we can go and make our case in Parliament, influence ministers and help shape the debate in the media.

Our biggest strength has been that, while national politics has ground to a halt in Westminster and got bogged down in Brexit, local government has got on with the job and continued to deliver the vital local public services that our communities rely on – despite losing 60p in every £1 of central government funding.

Those funding pressures are now acute, which is why it is as important as ever that we use our annual conference to publicise our innovative and good practice, and make the case for a sustainable financial settlement that allows us to improve our local areas and the lives of our residents.

*“Local government has got on with the job and continued to deliver the vital local public services that our communities rely on”*

## group leaders' comments



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

### Supporting councillors in opposition

*“All opposition Labour councillors have a valuable role to play in holding administrations to account”*

One in four Labour councillors is in opposition, ranging from small groups of just one or two councillors, to larger groups that may only be one or two wins away from taking control. But whatever position they are in locally, all opposition Labour councillors have a valuable role to play in holding administrations to account, flying the flag for our party, and in changing council policy through scrutiny or cross-party working.

We heard many such brilliant examples from opposition Labour councillors at our recent 'Effective opposition' conference in Birmingham, which attracted more than 130 councillors.

As a group, we are determined to ensure we support all our councillors, whatever political situation they are in, and this event was an important part of that mission.

It was inspiring to meet so many active, informed, and motivated councillors from around the country – we had members from every region of England and Wales.

We were joined by our excellent Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary Andrew Gwynne, as well as a diverse range of speakers and facilitators who led breakouts on subjects including working in two-tier areas, being a frontline councillor, and understanding council finance.

Thanks to everyone who attended – we look forward to seeing you put your learning into practice over the next year.



Councillor Howard Sykes MBE is Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group

### Council housing – a Liberal legacy

*“Liberal Democrat councils around the country are stepping up to deliver new council housing”*

Last year, we saw national celebrations to mark 70 years of the NHS. This year, we celebrate 100 years of council housing as we know it.

Council housing is often unfairly stigmatised, but now is the time to celebrate it.

After World War I, Liberal MP and Prime Minister David Lloyd George pledged “to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in”.

The 1919 Housing Act was the first step in nationwide provision of good-quality council homes – in the words of Lloyd George, ‘homes fit for heroes’.

It was followed, years later, by two more Acts that heralded the construction of more homes, including replacing slum dwellings and houses bombed out during World War II.

I am extremely proud of our party's role in delivering this landmark in Britain's history.

Liberal Democrat councils around the country are stepping up to deliver new council housing with the hard-fought-for additional freedoms and flexibilities that removing the housing borrowing cap has allowed – or working with housing associations to reach the same goal.

We have no excuses not to deliver now, so we need to pull our fingers out and get on with it.

Let us build some new council homes without waiting for World War III to prompt us into action.



Councillor Gillian Ford is a Lead Member of the LGA's Independent Group

### Opportunities for new ways of working

*“Local authorities continue to face financial challenges in delivering statutory services”*

It is incredible to believe that another year has been and gone, and that councillors are preparing to gather in Bournemouth from 2-4 July, for the LGA's annual conference.

Every year, the conference's Innovation Zone goes from strength to strength. This year, case studies will include presentations and discussions on housing, social isolation, arts and culture, technology, the creative care home and children's social care, and live data.

Local authorities continue to face financial challenges in delivering statutory services. With the increase in demand for adults' and children's services, innovation can only go so far, taking many authorities to tipping point.

The LGA's annual conference is the appropriate setting for members to consider opportunities, new ways of working and cross-party representation, to ensure we support our residents and communities at the highest level.

In our group sessions at conference, Independent members will be able to hear from expert speakers, including: Cllr Jonathan Bartley, Co-Leader of the Green Party; Professor Kevin Fenton, of Public Health England; and Lord Victor Adebowale CBE, crossbencher and Chief Executive of Turning Point.

The group will also be holding its annual general meeting, and you can join us at our annual conference dinner on Tuesday 2 July. If you haven't already registered, or would like more information, please contact the LGA Independent Group office by emailing [independentgroup@local.gov.uk](mailto:independentgroup@local.gov.uk)



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



## Protecting jobs by using local suppliers

**In a determined bid to support local businesses and protect local jobs, South Tyneside Council launched 'Supply South Tyneside' in 2011 – to help firms identify, bid for, and win public sector contracts.**

The council updated its internal procurement rules to maximise the opportunity for local suppliers to win council business and, in turn, support local economic regeneration. The main change was introducing financial thresholds for the minimum number of local businesses contacted for quotes.



**Councillor Iain Malcolm (Lab)** is Leader of South Tyneside Council

The policy does not guarantee that local businesses will secure council contracts – they all still have to demonstrate that they are competitive on both cost and quality.

However, new figures show that since the introduction of 'Supply South Tyneside', the amount the council spends with local businesses has increased by a staggering 21 per cent. In 2018/19, the council paid more than £207.5 million for goods and services, of which almost £115 million (55 per cent) was spent locally.

As a council, we are committed to doing everything we can to stimulate the local economy. We spend a significant amount of money on commissioned supplies, services and works provided by external organisations. They help us to deliver essential services from social care to housing repair.

We must ensure that not only do we get value for money for our council tax payers but that the money we spend reaps an economic benefit to our communities.

The 'Supply South Tyneside' scheme demonstrates our total commitment to the ongoing economic prosperity of the borough. It represents positive and direct action to ensure that buying local is not just common sense but makes really good business sense.

The whole idea is to spend more council money locally and to allow as many local firms as possible to compete for contracts to supply goods and services.

In uncertain economic times, it is even more important that we do everything we can to help our local businesses thrive.

## The environmental paradox

**We all need to do much, much more to help prevent global warming and be mindful that policies, even on a local level, can have a positive impact.**

We are duty bound to generate green energy and to protect and increase biodiversity. Where things start to get a little controversial, and paradoxical, is when these two environmental goals collide.

Many councils are considering the installation of solar panel arrays on their land. It is obviously a fantastic way of producing green energy and, in many cases, making a profit for cash-strapped councils. However some councils, including my own, are considering building them in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and near Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Some people will oppose these installations on the grounds that 'they don't look nice', but aesthetics aren't the problem here. How can we argue we are trying to 'save the planet' by building on protected areas and destroying biodiversity?

In 2017, Natural England concluded that solar farms "should not be built on or near protected areas". But it hasn't stopped councils from pursuing studies or contemplating the

idea of building solar arrays in AONBs or SSSIs.

Unfortunately, it appears there hasn't been a comprehensive national study on how building large solar panel arrays on or near SSSIs will affect biodiversity. A national study must surely take place before we make such decisions.

Meanwhile, many councils are borrowing vast sums of money to prop up the commercial property market in the hope of generating profits. With a failing retail sector and an uncertain future for many large companies on the high street, that could turn out to be a very risky long-term strategy.

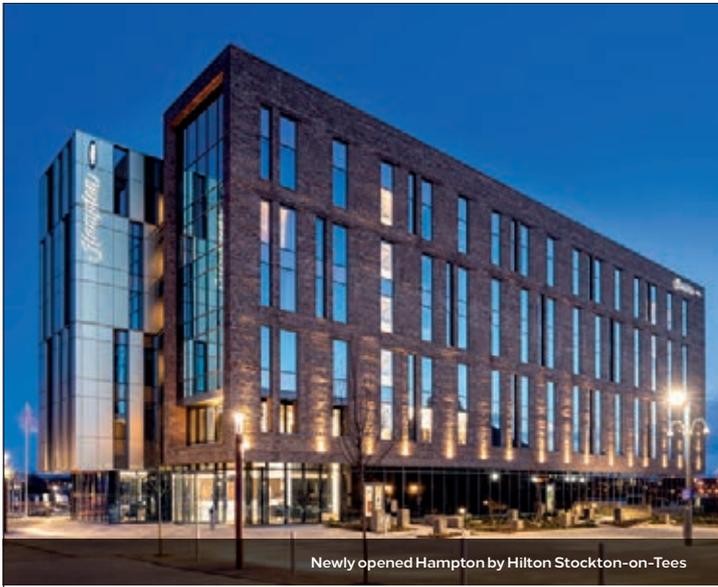
A better policy would be to establish a country-wide, multi-council-led consortium that



**Councillor Andy Patmore** is Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group at Hastings Borough Council

would invest in very large off-shore wind projects. This type of scheme could generate vast amounts of green energy, while giving councils a return on their investment, without spoiling our precious countryside – a much better use of Public Works Loan Board money, I would suggest.





Newly opened Hampton by Hilton Stockton-on-Tees



CGI of Hilton Woking



CGI of Hilton Garden Inn Stoke-on-Trent

**LGA**  
**19** ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
AND EXHIBITION 2019  
#LGAconf19

**Hilton**

**BRINGING THE WORLD'S MOST  
FAMOUS HOTEL BRAND TO YOUR  
Community**

Unrivalled collaboration with public sector stakeholders in hotel development projects across the United Kingdom.

Contact Elliot Newton  
Development Manager, UK & Ireland  
[Elliot.Newton@Hilton.com](mailto:Elliot.Newton@Hilton.com)



**Local  
Government  
Association**



#LGACONF20

**LGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
AND EXHIBITION 30 JUNE – 2 JULY HARROGATE**

To book your place, visit [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) | Sponsorship opportunities available, please contact [amanda.spicer@local.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.spicer@local.gov.uk)



**pfm**



# What Do You Stand For?

In a changing world, integrity is more important than ever. PFM started with the simple insight that local authorities and the public sector need independent advice from people they can trust. Our unwavering commitment to putting clients' needs first, without conflicts of interest, coupled with our bedrock principles of Ingenuity, Sustainability and Resourcefulness, help us deliver our promise.

**Advice for people transforming their world**  
[pfm.com](https://www.pfm.com)

Financial Advisory | Debt Management | Consulting  
Financial Modelling powered by Whitebirch | Specialised Services

PFM Advisors UK Limited (FRN:787698) is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. For professional clients and eligible counterparties only. Any local authority will need to elect to opt up as set out under MiFID II and meet the detailed opt up requirements as described in the FCA Handbook. For important disclosure information please go to [pfm.com/disclosures](https://www.pfm.com/disclosures)

# parliament

## Public services: investing to save



**The Government's Spending Review plans may be in flux, but the LGA continues to press the case for sustainable funding for councils to protect vital local services.**

Barely a month after telling the LGA's Smith Square debate that the Spending Review would kick-off ahead of Parliament's summer recess (see [first 637](#)), Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss MP has told MPs that this is now unlikely to happen because of the Conservative Party leadership contest.

Meanwhile, her department's "bloody-minded" approach to local government funding has been criticised by Lord Porter, in his last appearance as LGA Chairman before the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee.

He told the committee that the Treasury "does not understand that you have to invest to save", with funding cuts resulting in local

government "giving a worse service to the people we look after", which then costs taxpayers more than it should do.

"It is that inability of the Treasury team to look forward at how to invest in the communities we all look after. It is always about understanding the cost of everything and the value of nothing," he said.

In response to a question about use of reserves, Lord Porter said: "One-off investment that might bring down costs in the future is a good use of reserves, but using them to pay the electricity bill is insane."

He warned that people could die because of the lack of sustainable funding for adult social care, pointing out that money had been found for the NHS.

"If the Government thinks the policy going forward is to spend all your reserves, and then we will find some new money to give you after you have spent all your reserves, the first serious shock will be when a Secretary of State has to stand up and explain to the public why those people died because the money was not available," he told MPs.

"Why do we need to lose people because of money? We have choices about where we spend it; we just need to make better choices."

The importance of business rates as a source of income for councils, the impact of online retailing and out of town developments, the need for flexibility around reliefs, and the need to tackle the effect of business rates avoidance were raised at another evidence session, held by the Treasury Select Committee.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, told the committee that local authorities relied on the income from business rates to deliver services, particularly as they currently face a funding gap of an estimated £8 billion by 2024/25.

He told MPs, who are looking at the impact of business rates on businesses, that business rates income is not "filling in the gaps", but is "the fundamental core" of the local government funding system – "fundamental to our future financial survival".

He also highlighted the impact of outstanding business rates appeals on the level of reserves that local authorities have to hold.

"We estimate that something like £2.6 billion is currently sitting in local authority bank accounts that could be used on critical local services under pressure but are being retained, at the moment, to manage the risk of appeal," he told MPs.



You can find out more about [the LGA's parliamentary work](#) in our latest annual report, 'LGA in Parliament 2018/19', [free to download at www.local.gov.uk/parliament](#). [The full transcripts of the LGA's evidence to select committees](#) is available at [www.parliament.uk](#) – search by committee name

# councillor

## Supporting democracy overseas

The Turkish local government elections held on 31 March 2019 were momentous. The political parties had coalesced into two blocs – one pro and the other against President Erdoğan and his AKP party.

These elections were viewed by all as an opportunity to cast a judgement on the president's rule – seen by many as increasingly authoritarian – and took place against the backdrop of the failed 2016 coup, significant economic problems, and the continuing civil war in neighbouring Syria. Turnout was 84 per cent.

The Turkish government invited the Council of Europe's Congress of Regional and Local Authorities to be the sole international observers of these elections. The Council of Europe asked me to lead the international delegation of 24 councillors from 22 countries.

The monitoring mission in Turkey involved two separate visits to Ankara. Many courageous people came to talk to us knowing that what they said could lead to their detention or to them suffering intimidation.

We heard complaints that the government had deliberately moved security personnel into particular areas, and had them registered to vote there in a direct attempt to change the likely result. The results in the Kurdish areas suggested that while the



Councillor Andrew Dawson is Head of a Council of Europe delegation of international councillors observing Turkish local elections

opposition HDP was largely successful, the movement of security personnel may well have swung some results.

On election day, our monitoring mission divided into teams of two and went all over the country, visiting 140 polling stations in urban and rural areas. While it was disconcerting to see heavily armed gendarmes in and around the rural polling stations, the voting we saw was orderly and well organised.

I observed one of the counts. I saw every vote held up and the chairman announcing who the vote was for as he showed it to all witnessing the count. The votes were tallied both by the ballot box committee (mostly men) and those observing (mixed). Every member of the committee certified the result of the count.

These 'minutes' were then scanned, posted online and sent to the relevant district counting centres where the counts were aggregated, and the overall results declared. It is a very swift process.

Although I am not fully convinced that Turkey currently has a free and fair electoral environment, the fact that many parties have been successful is a positive sign of Turkey's democratic resilience. The mayoralty of Ankara passed from the AKP to the opposition – and the initial result in Istanbul suggested that the same had happened there.

However, the Istanbul result has subsequently been overturned with the Supreme Election Board requiring the mayoral election to be re-run on 23 June, as this edition of **first** was going to press.

The objections made by the ruling party against the voters' lists of certain Istanbul districts, on the ground of alleged irregularities, came after the legal deadline. This is contrary to our understanding of democratic fair play in elections and I will return as part of a high-profile mission to observe the re-run election in Istanbul.



The Council of Europe was established just after the end of World War II, to defend democracy, promote the rule of law and ensure fundamental human rights. The Congress of Regional and Local Authorities is the local government arm of the council, comprising 300 councillors from its 47 member countries. It prepares periodic reports on local and regional democracy in each of its member countries, and sends its members to observe local elections.

For more information, please visit [www.coe.int/en/web/congress](http://www.coe.int/en/web/congress)



© SANDRO WELTIN, COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## local by-elections

### Cambridgeshire, Trumpington

LIB DEM HELD  
20.6% over Lab      Turnout 37%

### Craven, Upper Wharfedale

CON HELD  
40% over Green      Turnout 51.3%

### Durham, Shildon and Dene Valley

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB  
19.4% over Lab      Turnout 31.2%

### Durham, Spennymoor

IND GAIN FROM SP IND  
2.6% over Lab      Turnout 29.9%

### Kent, Northfleet and Gravesend West

LAB HELD  
15.3% over Con      Turnout 29%

### Kent, Sittingbourne North

SWALE IND GAIN FROM CON  
3.7% over Lab      Turnout 27%

### Gloucestershire, Churchdown

LIB DEM HELD  
20.2% over Con      Turnout 34.5%

### Gosport, Brockhurst

LIB DEM HELD  
28.9% over Con      Turnout 25.6%

### Havering, Cranham

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION HELD  
59.6% over Green      Turnout 35.7%

### Lewisham, Evelyn

LAB HELD  
30.7% over Green      Turnout 25.2%

### Lewisham, Whitefoot

LAB HELD  
32.3% over Lib Dem      Turnout 24.8%

### Neath Port Talbot, Resolven

IND GAIN FROM LAB  
34.7% over Lab      Turnout 60.3%

### Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Maer & Whitmore

CON HELD  
73.3% over Lib Dem      Turnout 37%

### Northumberland, Holywell

LAB HELD  
25.5% over Con      Turnout 41.3%

### Shropshire, Belle Vue

LAB HELD  
15.6% over Lib Dem      Turnout 39.4%

### Surrey, Haslemere

IND GAIN FROM CON  
36.8% over Con      Turnout 42.9%

### West Sussex, Northgate and West Green

LAB HELD  
17.2% over Con      Turnout 30.2%

# elections

## Swing against the party establishment



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



### The two main parties continue to struggle, and Liberal Democrats and Independents are taking advantage.

In 17 by-elections, the Conservative vote share fell by an average of nine percentage points. Labour's vote is more varied – sometimes a modest increase or decrease – but overall a fall of five points. Labour's poor by-election performance is unusual for the Opposition party at this stage of a Parliament.

Two by-elections in Durham capture the electoral mood. In Shildon and Dene Valley, there was a Liberal Democrat gain from Labour. One month before the 2017 General Election, Labour won all three seats but the margin between its third-placed candidate and James Huntington, the Liberal Democrats' closest pursuer, was just 200 votes. His victory this time followed a doubling of vote share, with the Conservative and Labour shares both declining.

A second Durham contest saw Independent Ian Geldard gain the seat left vacant by Geoff Darkes' resignation from the Spennymoor Independents group. In 2017, this group captured all three seats,

with Geldard relegated to fifth place. Earlier this year, Geldard resigned from Labour, citing Brexit and the party's failures in Opposition. Eight candidates, including three Independents and a representative from the Spennymoor group, gave electors variety but Geldard was re-elected by 68 votes.

Three further Independent gains – two from Conservative and one from Labour – provide further evidence of the swing against the party establishment.

In Kent, the Swale Independents candidate, Jason Clinch, captured the Conservative seat of Sittingbourne North with 36 per cent of the votes cast. The group did not contest the seat in 2017 but now has a representative on the county authority, augmenting its 10 district council seats. The defending party's vote share fell by 23 percentage points, allowing Labour to edge into second place, despite a drop in its vote too.

Surrey's Haslemere division saw a quick return to the county council for Nikki Barton after she stood down prior to the 2017 election. Her previous winning margin was just 20 votes, but this by-election victory was rather more decisive – a 1,500 vote margin over the heavily defeated Conservatives.

The death of long-serving Labour councillor Des Davies resulted in a contest for Neath Port Talbot's Resolven division. Historically, the seat has featured a contest between Labour and Plaid Cymru but this vacancy was fought by five candidates. It was local Independent and political novice Dean Lewis who topped the poll with six in 10 votes cast, with Labour's vote falling by 16 percentage points.



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

“Budgets are being cut, so supporting people to live **independently** is getting harder.”

**Chichester District Council**

**Jane Dodsworth**  
Director of Residents' Services

**WE PARTNER WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SOLVE YOUR TELECARE WORRIES.**

With decreasing budgets and increasing demand we can help you get the most out of your telecare. We can remove your worries about future digital investment and give your residents the service they deserve.

Exclusive telecare provider to  ageuk



**PPP Taking Care**