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Government
Association

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UKREiiF: partners for growth

Spending Review 2025

Local solutions to
national challenges **p9**

A warm welcome

LGA support for newly
elected members **p12**

An ordinary home

Housing for people with
learning disabilities **p22**

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Electoral change

Welcome to all those new and old councillors returning to local government after the elections on 1 May.

In this month's **first**, you can find out about the LGA's support for newly elected members (p12) – including our national new councillors' welcome event on 19 June (see www.local.gov.uk/events).

We also provide help for councils that are undergoing changes in political control, political leadership, or have moved to 'no overall control' (p14).

Professors Rallings and Thrasher have some post-poll analysis of the election results (p30), and we look at how these affect the political balance of the LGA (p4).

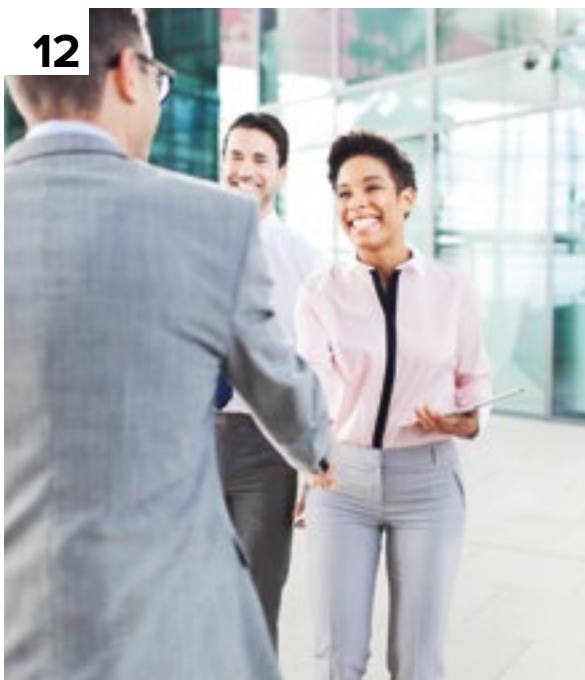
With less than two weeks until the Spending Review on 11 June, we revisit the LGA's proposals for closing the spending gap in councils' budgets (p9, p26).

And we have a report on the LGA's work at last month's UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, which was attended by representatives of more than 275 councils (p10).

Other features this month include updates on our national recruitment campaign for local government (p21), highways maintenance (p18) and knife crime (p19), while our lead comments are from the Welsh Local Government Association (p25) and the County Councils Network (p29). ●

Councillor Louise Gittins
is LGA Chair

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Editor Karen Thornton
Design CPL One www.cplone.co.uk
Advertising chris.dixon@cplone.co.uk

Write to **first**:
Local Government Association,
18 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
Email karen.thornton@local.gov.uk

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Adult social care ‘must be SR priority’

As first was going to press, the LGA was spearheading a social media ‘thunderclap’ with more than 100 other leaders in adult social care, calling on Chancellor Rachel Reeves to work with the sector to mitigate pressures on councils, providers and charities.

Ahead of the Spending Review on 11 June, the care coalition wants the Government to strengthen adult social care and to see funding as an investment rather than a cost.

The Government has asked Baroness Louise Casey to chair an independent commission into adult social care, and terms of reference for the review were published in May.

An initial phase looking at medium-term changes possible within existing resources is due to report in 2026, while recommendations on “the long-term transformation of adult social care” – including how the sector is resourced – are expected in 2028.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said the commission faces a “challenging task” given budgetary and practical obstacles, and that drawing on the experiences of people who use care services – and of councils as service providers – will be “crucial” to it achieving its objectives.

“Key issues the commission must address include establishing a far greater emphasis on prevention, earlier action and support,” he added.



“Likewise, tackling the recruitment and retention challenges facing the workforce must be a priority. This will require looking at pay, but focus must also be given to training, development and progression for the workforce.

“Lastly, while we recognise the commission’s timescales, we urge the Government to revisit these to reflect the urgency of the situation, and the reality

that people and organisations have already waited long enough for real change.

“The LGA, with its unique cross-party structure, stands ready to work closely with the commission, and calls on the Government to use the forthcoming Spending Review to provide the funding needed to stabilise the sector in the short term and lay solid foundations for longer-term reforms.” ●

Reform UK is to set up the first new political group office at the LGA in the organisation’s history, after the party’s success in the 1 May local elections (see p29, p30).

Every year after local elections, the LGA’s political proportionality is recalculated and independently verified, and used to determine the make-up of the LGA Board and all the LGA’s policy boards and committees.

Labour remains the largest group at the LGA, at 35.9 per

New political group for LGA

cent, retaining the right to choose the organisation’s chair.

The other parties are: Conservatives, 24.1 per cent; Liberal Democrats, 17 per cent; Independents, 10.2 per cent; Reform, 7.8 per cent; Greens, 4.6 per cent; and Plaid Cymru, 0.4 per cent.

Political groups whose total share of the weighted electorate is 5 per cent or more are entitled to their own group

office. Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: “Now that Reform UK has notified the LGA of its intention to form a group, we will offer our support in helping them formalise a new group office.

“Local government is at its strongest when we speak with one voice to national government on the many challenges facing our sector right now, including the acute

financial pressures on councils, as well as the ever-increasing demand for their much relied upon local services.

“As cross-party Chair, I am committed to working with all our political groups to strengthen local government so our communities thrive.”

The new LGA Board will be elected at the annual meeting of the LGA’s General Assembly on 1 July, ahead of its annual conference in Liverpool from 1-3 July (see www.local.gov.uk/events). ●

Tributes paid following Oxfordshire fire deaths

The LGA has paid tribute to two firefighters and a member of the public who died in a fire at an Oxfordshire business park.

Firefighters Jennie Logan, 30, and Martyn Sadler, 38, and father-of-two Dave Chester, 57, were killed in the fire on 15 May at Bicester Motion.

Cllr Wendy Maples, Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee at the LGA, which represents fire and rescue authorities, said: "I am deeply saddened to hear of the devastating loss of two firefighters and a member of the public, following the fire in Bicester, Oxfordshire. On

behalf of the LGA, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those who have tragically lost their lives.

"This is a stark reminder of the extraordinary bravery and selflessness our firefighters demonstrate every day. We also hold in our thoughts the two firefighters who were seriously injured and wish them a swift recovery." ●



'Complex needs driving high care costs'

A failure to support children and young people with complex needs is driving very high care costs and not improving children's lives, according to a new report commissioned by the LGA.

It follows a previous LGA survey that found the number of children's home placements costing £10,000 or more per week – the equivalent of more than £0.5 million a year – increased from 120 to 1,500 between 2018 and 2023.

This latest research, carried out by the National Children's Bureau, warns that the challenge of meeting the increasing complexity of children's needs – along with a lack of appropriate homes for these children and the linked challenges with commissioning those placements – is leading to an escalation in very high-cost placements.

Those participating in the research

pointed to a range of factors leading to increasing complexity of need, from the impact of the pandemic and historic cuts to early help, to rising levels of complex autism, mental health challenges and high instances of self-harm.

The LGA is calling on the Government in the 11 June Spending Review to ensure all councils receive sufficient funding to invest long term into family help, child protection and child-in-care and care leaver services.

Cllr Arooj Shah, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "As local partners, we have key roles to play, and the Government can drive this from the top. By integrating planning and funding across departments and using the Spending Review to ensure services have the resources they need, we can make sure children receive the care they deserve." ●

Rollout of world's first gonorrhoea vaccine

The NHS and local government are to roll out the world's first vaccine programme to prevent gonorrhoea.

Eligible patients, including gay and bisexual men who have a recent history of multiple sexual partners or a sexually transmitted infection (STI), will be offered the vaccine through council-commissioned sexual health services from early August.

Analysis led by Imperial College London suggests the vaccine, known as 4CMenB, could avert up to 100,000 cases of gonorrhoea and save the NHS £79 million over the next decade if high uptake is achieved and an ongoing programme confirmed.

Local providers will identify and contact those eligible through sexual health services. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Sexual health services, commissioned by local authorities, have played a vital role in detecting, treating and managing the growing number of cases of gonorrhoea across the country.

"The targeted rollout of the vaccine, which could be a game-changer and dramatically reduce transmission of gonorrhoea, is good news.

"Sexual health clinics are on the front line of STI outbreaks. It is vital that we have a strong and well-funded health protection system to support the vaccine rollout.

"It's important that eligible people across England can access vaccines easily when they become available, and get protected." ●



News in brief

Apprentice of the year

As **first** was going to press, Eve Hind, a Business Administration Apprentice at Durham County Council, was named Local Government Apprentice of the Year 2025. Ms Hind, who joined the council straight from school, said: "Winning this event has made me so much more confident in myself." John Hewitt, Durham's Chief Executive, added: "This award highlights Eve's contribution, talent, commitment and professionalism that our apprenticeship programme is designed to support."

Member relationships

The LGA has set out its blueprint for serving a changing local government sector – with a focus on maintaining and developing its relationship with member councils – in its new business plan for 2025-28. Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: "The strength of the LGA and our success lies in the partnership between our elected members and officers, who work together to drive progress and provide support. The business plan will provide a strong foundation for setting priorities across all our work, support greater accountability across the organisation and to our members, and... help us focus resources where we can have the greatest impact."

New LGA finance chief

Nick Bell is the LGA's new interim Director of Finance and Corporate Services. He has extensive experience across local government, education and care, most recently at East Midlands Combined Authority as Interim Director of Finance, and at Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority as Executive Director (Resources). He has also held Chief Executive roles at Staffordshire County Council, the Shaw Trust and United Colleges Group.

Waste tax 'will cost councils billions'

A planned tax on burning waste could place billions of pounds of unavoidable costs on councils and needs reform, the LGA has said.

The Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) puts a market price on carbon emissions. It currently applies to the aviation industry, and the last government proposed expanding it to cover the incineration of waste from 2028, which councils support.

However, councils have no powers to reduce the amount of fossil-based material put on the market, and no meaningful levers to reduce the levels of fossil-based waste sent for incineration, nor do they have the ability to deliver the infrastructure to recycle plastics or capture carbon.

In a new report, the LGA has warned that the ETS could cost councils £747 million in 2028, rising to £1.1 billion in 2036, with a total cost over this period of up to £6.5 billion – forcing councils to cut back waste services, rather than targeting manufacturers that have the power to reduce plastic production.

Cllr Adam Hug, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: "Councils want a reduction in carbon emissions and support



the aims of the scheme, but... current proposals are hitting the wrong target.

"They will load billions of pounds of extra costs onto councils, who will have little choice but to cut back valued local waste and recycling services and net zero projects, while producers of fossil-based materials avoid incentives to reduce what they produce.

"The Spending Review is an opportunity for government to review these proposals and force producers of fossil-based waste to reduce the amount of plastic entering the market." ●

Technology partnership to champion digital innovation

The LGA has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with techUK, the technology trade association, to help advance digital transformation across local government.

The partnership will foster stronger collaboration between local government and the technology industry, with a shared mission to promote the secure, inclusive and effective use of digital technologies for the benefit of citizens and local communities.

The organisations will also work together on a project-by-project basis to address shared priorities such as procurement, skills development, cybersecurity and resilience, artificial intelligence, and innovation.

Joanna Killian, the LGA's Chief Executive Officer, said: "This landmark MoU marks a pivotal step in unlocking the transformative potential of digital technology for local government.

"The partnership will champion collaboration, highlight the vital role of small and medium-sized enterprises, and help improve service delivery.

"By fostering stronger connections, we aim to harness cutting-edge solutions and agile expertise to build thriving, resilient, and digitally empowered communities." ●

£50m for veterans

The Government has announced a new support system for Armed Forces veterans, called VALOUR.

The plans include £50 million to establish a network of VALOUR-recognised support centres across the UK and deploy regional field officers to connect local, regional and national services.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Investment to improve support for our veterans is positive. It is important that this new service strengthens – but does not duplicate – the vast experience councils have of creating partnerships with local

veterans' services. We look forward to collaborating with the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Defence on a service model that recognises the expertise already in place across local government and directs resources where they are needed the most.

"Councils are committed to supporting the Armed Forces communities, and work hard to deliver duties under the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure they have access to housing, health and community services. This is despite not receiving any specific funding from central government for this.

"The Spending Review must adequately fund councils so they can fully support our veterans." ●

New homes to get solar panels

Almost all new homes in England are to be fitted with solar panels during construction within two years, under plans being drawn up by the Government.

The move follows a call from the LGA to make solar panels a requirement on all new homes to meet climate targets and cut household bills.

Currently, 60 per cent of new homes built do not have rooftop solar panels. A recently published LGA report says making this a requirement would increase that number and have a positive impact.

Benefits include decreasing carbon and costs for households, with an estimated saving of £440 per year, helping meet green targets and saving residents money.

The LGA's 'Empowering local climate action: advice to government' report sets out a range of other policy and funding recommendations aimed at decarbonising housing, expanding renewable energy and preserving biodiversity.

Cllr Adam Hug, LGA Environment



Spokesperson, said: "This report sets out what councils can achieve and how to do it, if the Government is able to back them with the powers and funding to turn this into a reality.

"Councils are ready to go further and faster on climate action – but we need a plan that works in partnership with local government. However, the funding or policies needed to empower them to help fully realise this ambition are not yet in place.

"The Government should use the Spending Review to ensure that councils are sufficiently funded and take on the policy recommendations that will help local government fulfil its role in tackling climate change." ●

News in brief

Violence against women and girls

Women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence continue to be let down because government departments don't have a complete understanding of the extent of the problem – nor of what is working locally.

So say MPs on the influential Public Accounts Committee, whose recent report also highlights the need for a more proactive approach to the proliferation of misogynistic attitudes across social media platforms.

Cllr Tom Hunt, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said councils are determined to play a key role in providing essential support services. But he added: "The sad truth is that financial pressures have impacted councils' ability to provide these services as quickly and effectively as is needed.

"The Spending Review is the opportune moment for government to ensure councils are sufficiently funded to keep victims and survivors safe."

'Crisis' in children's mental health

Demand for children's mental health services continues to rise, despite increases in investment, according to the Children's Commissioner for England's annual report. Deep regional inequalities and variations in waiting times for treatment, and a 7.7 per cent rise in the number of children being referred because they are 'in crisis', are also highlighted by the report.

Cllr Arooj Shah, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "This important report highlights the need for urgent action.

"In the Spending Review, we are calling for a cross-government plan to support children and young people, alongside adequate funding for children's services. In addition, mental health training needs to become a core element of training for all staff that support children and young people."

Local oversight of education

The LGA's lobbying has secured significant changes to draft legislation

As first was going to press, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was in its committee stage in the House of Lords, with seven scheduled sessions beginning towards the end of May and running into June.

The LGA welcomes the progress of this vital legislation, which has already incorporated a number of significant reforms following months of our lobbying.

Throughout the Commons stages of the bill, the LGA played a key role in influencing its direction.

LGA Vice-Chair Cllr Bev Craig appeared before the Commons' Education Committee, where discussions focused on the proposed register for children not in school.

Ruth Stanier, the LGA's Assistant Director of Policy – People, gave oral evidence to the bill committee, setting out the LGA's views on critical provisions, including local oversight of education,

regulation of children's social care providers, and school admissions.

As a result, many of the LGA's long-standing calls have been addressed in the revised bill.

The bill now includes the introduction of a single unique identifier for children – a vital tool for better information sharing across agencies and preventing children from falling through the cracks.

The LGA is also pleased to see provisions for financial oversight of the largest providers of children's social care placements, alongside new Ofsted powers to inspect and regulate these providers.

These changes address concerns around the growing dominance of a small number of private companies and their impact on placement stability and cost.

In a major win for children in care, corporate parenting responsibilities will now extend beyond councils to central government departments and other public



sector bodies. We will continue to call for these duties to go further and, particularly, to include the police, who play a vital role in safeguarding and supporting vulnerable young people.

On education, the bill introduces new powers to limit the number of branded uniform and PE kit items that schools can require. This reflects our calls to reduce the cost burden on families and remove barriers to participation in sport and extracurricular activities.

Other LGA-backed reforms include: a new duty on councils to maintain 'children not in school' registers, paired with requirements to support home-educating parents; and mandatory cooperation between all schools and councils on admissions and planning school places – ensuring every child can access a suitable local school place.

Looking ahead, we will support amendments during the Lords' committee stage to introduce automatic enrolment for eligible pupils to receive free school meals – an amendment that would ensure no child misses out because of paperwork or administrative delays.

As the bill progresses, we will continue working with Peers, MPs and officials to secure a system that delivers for children and families.

With the right support and funding, we stand with councils ready to implement these reforms and drive improvements for all children – particularly those who are most vulnerable. ●



i To find out more about the LGA's work in Parliament, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament

With Chancellor Rachel Reeves due to present her plans for public spending for the next three years on 11 June, the LGA continues to make the case for more investment in local government.

It's not just about finding more money for councils – vital though that is to address rising cost and demand pressures in key local services such as adult and children's social care, and housing and temporary accommodation.

It's also about demonstrating how, with reforms and additional powers, councils can continue to improve the lives of our residents and help solve the national challenges facing us all.

For example, we face a national housing crisis: further reforms to Right to Buy would allow councils to retain and build more social housing.

Deficits in respect of supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) threaten to destabilise many councils – but

Closing the gap

Councils have the solutions to national problems

investing in early identification of needs and support, and making mainstream schools more inclusive, would help turn the tide financially while also delivering better outcomes for children and young people.

Urgent investment is needed to stabilise the adult social care system – and this would help councils to relieve pressures on the NHS. Action is also needed to address care staff recruitment and retention problems – but more national recognition of the economic and social value of carers' work would go a long way.

Councils are at the forefront of action on climate change: consolidating and devolving funds from existing

government schemes into a Warm Homes Plan would help deliver long-term investment in retrofitting our damp and energy inefficient housing stock.

As leaders of place and as major local employers, councils have a critical and unique role in unlocking inclusive and sustainable growth. Greater fiscal decentralisation, including mechanisms such as a tourist levy, would help support that role.

The general financial pressures facing the sector would also be eased by government providing general rather than ring-fenced grant funding, reducing the number of different 'pots' of funding, and ending the use of competitive bidding.

And we can build on the digital innovation that has already taken place in councils if the Government works with the LGA to create a dedicated

Local Government Centre for Digital Technology (LGCDT) within the LGA.

In particular, the Government has set out an agenda for public sector reform, and councils should be central to this because of the clear evidence of the value for money of their preventative services.

Councils are the backbone of our country, with dedicated councillors and officers making a real difference every day to help build thriving communities and improve the lives of their residents.

The LGA's submission to the Spending Review sets out a clear business case for increased investment, financial support and a package of measures to give them more tools to continue with that work – measures that would also deliver on the Government's reform and growth agenda. ●

See <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/spending-review-2025>



Investment and infrastructure



LGA Chief Executive Joanna Killian (c) with Mayors Oliver Coppard and Kim McGuinness

Partnerships are key to helping communities thrive



Councillor Louise Gittins is Chair of the LGA

From planning and housebuilding to enabling inclusive and sustainable growth through education and skills, councils are central players in how places, economies and communities thrive.

That's why I was delighted to lead an LGA team attending the UK's Real Estate

Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF), which took place in Leeds in late May.

The LGA – along with many of our member councils – contributed to, or led, the conversation at a number of events at the forum, such as on local leadership in economic transformation, housing and the impact of devolution.

Our team – including LGA Senior Vice-Chairman Cllr Kevin Bentley, LGA Chief Executive Joanna Killian, and Eve Roodhouse, our Director of Strategy and Policy – also met ministers, mayors, investors, and other stakeholders, to make the continuing case for investing in councils as economic growth partners.

Local authorities are the leaders of place and at the forefront of enabling regeneration projects that breathe new life into town centres, provide affordable housing and create green public spaces.

They are vital in the maintenance of our roads, are the largest public funders of culture, sport and leisure in England, and are big players in the wider economy and workforce too – employing 1.3 million staff, delivering 800 different services, and responsible for £130.8 billion of spending every year.

We went to UKREiiF because we know

The Great North

A new partnership of northern mayors aims to unlock jobs, opportunity and prosperity for the North of England.

Launched at the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) in Leeds, The Great North will lead international trade missions on pan-northern investment propositions and host a new Northern Investment Summit to champion opportunity and the potential of the north's 15 million people.

Kim McGuinness, Mayor of the North East, who is chairing the partnership, said: "The time has come for a resurgent north to unite and

proudly lead the way to a fairer, more prosperous UK, and The Great North is our vehicle for change.

"This country needs a northern story written by northern minds, not one handed to us by Whitehall, and this Great North partnership puts us on track to write it.

"Whether it is powering the nation's homes or powering its imagination, this is the north that will lead the way, building on a great legacy. The opportunity is immense, and we are ready to work with anyone who is equally determined to create good jobs."

Elsewhere at UKREiiF,

Mayor McGuinness joined Oliver Coppard, Mayor of South Yorkshire, and LGA Chief Executive Joanna Killian (pictured), for a panel conversation that emphasised collaboration not competition.

Ms Killian, reflecting on the launch of The Great North, said: "While different areas will have strong views on the Government's devolution agenda, genuine devolution has the potential to play a huge role in promoting inclusive economic growth, creating jobs, and improving public services.

"In what is a very centralised country, moving funding and power from Whitehall to local leaders is needed, and

must be done in a way that empowers councils and the communities they serve."

Ms Killian outlined peer-led LGA research, on how councils can be effective members of combined authorities, involving a team of councillors and officers interviewing fellow council leaders and chief executives across all tiers of local government.

Based on this work, a learning report, including reflections and recommendations on devolution for the sector, is set to be launched at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool from 1-3 July (see www.local.gov.uk/conference).



The LGA's Eve Roodhouse (second on left) with other speakers at a UKREiIF session on building the super cities of the future

that, to help communities thrive and to deliver the high-quality and essential services residents rely on, we must work in partnership with ministers, mayors, and the wider public, private and third sectors.

In their turn, councils are critical partners – for the Government to deliver its missions and for mayors to achieve their regional goals.

As Local Government Minister Jim McMahon told delegates: “Councils are the bedrock of our state.”

However, we need the resources and flexibility to work with partners to invest in local infrastructure and support local growth in a way that recognises the unique challenges and opportunities each place faces.

Devolution should be based on the principle of subsidiarity, with clear opportunities for powers and responsibilities to be devolved down, and a defined role to co-design and co-deliver services with mayors.

Partnership working is essential and was fundamental to conversations at UKREiIF. By fostering stronger connections, local government can harness cutting-edge solutions, leverage agile expertise and build thriving, resilient, and empowered communities that are built on high-quality services. ●

● Please see the **LGA's LinkedIn and social media accounts** to find out more about some of the discussions that took place at UKREiIF

How devolution can help deliver homes



Eve Roodhouse is the LGA's Director of Strategy and Policy

Thriving communities need good homes, but we all know the scale of the challenge we face when it comes to building enough housing.

More than 26,000 households were made homeless last year by ‘no fault’ evictions, and over 123,000 families are stuck in temporary accommodation. Rents and house prices continue to rise much faster than wages, making home ownership ever harder.

However, by shifting power closer to people, devolution lets local leaders tailor housing and planning to their area's needs.

We've already seen positive results; where devolved powers have been used effectively, there are promising signs of stronger regional economies, improved housing delivery, and enhanced local decision-making.

That's why the Government's commitment to greater devolution in England is essential; it aligns with the LGA's long-held ambition that every area can secure a deal that works for their local economy and residents.

But devolution must be backed by proper support. Local leaders need the resources and frameworks to make new powers work. The LGA has called for national housing funds to be channelled into multi-year, place-based settlements, so councils have certainty to plan long-term housing pipelines.

Councils also need a multi-year council housebuilding support programme and powers to buy and prepare land for homes.

I was delighted to chair a panel at the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) exploring the roles of devolution in delivering those homes, and to take part in another session on business-led solutions to the planning crisis.

We can't build homes, drive economic growth, or deliver infrastructure without an effective and well-resourced planning system. That's why the recent Planning and Infrastructure Bill is so important for councils.

The bill includes a long-standing LGA priority – allowing councils to set their own planning fees locally, fully covering the true cost of processing applications – as well as stronger compulsory purchase powers to bring forward stalled or underused land.

To truly build our planning capacity, we also need targeted investments in skills and recruitment – such as the government-funded Pathways to Planning, the LGA's graduate initiative that places talented young planners directly into council planning departments.

When we invest in planning, we're not just speeding up development – we're investing in the places people call home, in healthier lives, and in communities where all can flourish.

As ever, success depends on implementation, and ensuring these devolution and planning changes go hand in hand with the right resourcing, flexibility, and continued local democratic oversight.

“The LGA, working with the District Councils’ Network and the County Councils Network, makes sure that the voice of local government is heard by national politicians... because local government is the part of society that keeps the country going”

Councillor Kevin Bentley, LGA Senior Vice-Chairman, speaking at UKREiIF

Welcome to local government

The LGA provides a wide range of support for newly elected members

You pounded the streets, knocked on doors, delivered leaflets, engaged with residents on social media, and got yourself elected.

So, what happens next?

Serving your community as a councillor is one of the most important and exciting roles you can perform. But while it is a rewarding experience, it is also challenging work, and you will find yourself with many separate roles to balance.

Everyone in your community has diverse needs and opinions, and will make different, sometimes conflicting, demands of you.

Every day, you will be expected to balance the needs of your local area, your

residents and voters, community groups, businesses, your political party (if you belong to one) and your council.

Councillors play a vital role in deciding how their council uses public resources, making sure it performs against its objectives, and ensuring the council uses its resources effectively. And councillors may hold a variety of roles, every one of which is important in ensuring that the council is governed effectively.

All of that is on top of maintaining your own personal commitments to family, friends and workplace. It may sound daunting, but you are not alone.

In addition to the induction and training provided by your council and your political party, by becoming a councillor

Events for new councillors

The LGA's annual national new councillors' event will take place on 19 June between 5pm and 7pm.

Senior LGA peers and officers will discuss the support the LGA provides to its members, both nationally and regionally. The virtual session will provide information on our leadership and sector-led improvement offers, as well as the LGA's priorities for the forthcoming year.

Leading peers from each of the LGA's political groups will provide advice and tips for newly elected councillors, and the groups will also lead sessions for their new members.

To book your place, and view other relevant events and webinars, visit local.gov.uk/events

you are automatically eligible to access the LGA's wide-ranging support for elected members.

Our councillor hub (local.gov.uk/councillor-hub) is your first port of call for learning, leadership and development opportunities that can help you progress your career in local government – and you can read about some of these below (see 'Developing your council career').

Our learning resources cover the skills you need to be effective – from influencing skills to becoming an effective ward

Developing your council career

As councillors, you are uniquely placed to make a real difference to residents' lives.

The LGA is here to help you do this through opportunities to develop your skills throughout your councillor journey, from newly elected to new leader.

We support all councils across England and the resources we've created draw on the knowledge and

expertise of our member councils and our sector.

As a starting point, we have three key resources that support new (and existing) councillors (you can see these at local.gov.uk/community-leadership).

First, there is our Community Leadership offer that provides resources to support politicians in their role as community leaders, facilitators

and advocates. It includes face-to-face and distance learning resources, as well as 25 workbooks on topics such as chairing skills and being an effective ward councillor.

Second, we have our Local Leadership Framework for Councillors, which gives suggestions, prompts and resources to help you develop the skills to be a leader and work with your communities.

Third, we have a bespoke councillor e-learning platform that provides distance learning modules and online events.

If you have specific policy interests – anything from apprenticeships and adult social care to transformation and workforce – we'd suggest the two following actions:

- subscribe to our local government e-bulletins on the policy areas you're interested in, at local.gov.uk/e-bulletins



councillor – and the policy and service areas delivered by local government, from social care to licensing.

Councils deal with everything from schools, care of older people and roads, to rubbish, libraries and local planning.

Behind all of this is a web of legislation and processes that most people do not see. As a councillor, understanding how it works will help you to best represent and support your local community.

So, we also have a helpful 'introduction to local government', covering how the sector is organised, how decisions are made, and how the workforce is made up.

Local government touches the lives of everybody, every day, and this is your opportunity to shape, influence and participate in the strategic development of your local area. Good luck! ●

Your questions answered

See below for some frequently asked questions from new councillors. You can find more questions and top tips at [moredetails.uk/newc](https://www.local.gov.uk/moredetails.uk/newc)

Q: How can I access the information I need to be an effective councillor?

A: Your council's website and intranet will contain lots of information about the council, the way it works, timetable of meetings, its services and the local area. The LGA's free data benchmarking platform, LG Inform, presents up-to-date published data about your local area and can help you review and compare your council's performance with other authorities. See [local.gov.uk/lginform](https://www.local.gov.uk/lginform)

Q: How do councils share best practice?

A: The LGA regularly captures and publishes good practice via its case studies database (see [local.gov.uk/case-studies](https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies)). **first**, our monthly membership magazine for councillors, also highlights good practice across the local government sector and will be delivered to you directly. Please email karen.thornton@local.gov.uk if you are not receiving a copy or to amend your details.

Q: How will my personal development and support needs be met?

A: Your council will signpost you to relevant activities and provide support; some is mandatory, some optional, and this will vary from council to council. The LGA provides a series of councillor workbooks covering key topics, from chairing skills to stress management and personal resilience (visit [local.gov.uk/councillor-workbooks](https://www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbooks)). Many of the LGA's national events are free to member councils (go to [local.gov.uk/events](https://www.local.gov.uk/events)).

Q: What advice can you give about personal safety?

A: The LGA has tailored advice for councillors around handling abuse and intimidation and managing personal safety, which can supplement any information you receive from your local council. This advice includes practical steps to reduce risks associated with engagement with residents and others, both in-person and online. See [local.gov.uk/civility-public-life](https://www.local.gov.uk/civility-public-life)

Q: I would like advice from the LGA, where do I go?

A: Your LGA regional team is your 'front door' to the LGA and your principal adviser is your initial point of contact. For more information about these, see [local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers-and-regional-teams](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers-and-regional-teams)

- take a look at Leadership Essentials, where we have bespoke programmes on key portfolio and service areas, such as audit, children's services, and fire and rescue – see [local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials)

You can also network with and learn from councillors with shared characteristics.

We have 'Focus on Leadership' events for black, Asian and ethnic minority councillors, LGBTQ+ councillors, opposition leaders and deputy leaders, and young councillors (those aged under 40) – see [moredetails.uk/cod](https://www.local.gov.uk/moredetails.uk/cod)

For disabled councillors and candidates, we run bespoke programmes to increase representation and support your development to become leaders in local government – see [moredetails.uk/cds](https://www.local.gov.uk/moredetails.uk/cds)

As you progress as a councillor, our Next Generation and Boosting Middle Leaders programmes may be useful.

Our Next Generation programme supports and encourages you to be a bold, confident political leader and progress your political career to the next level.

Our Boosting Middle Leaders programme is delivered in collaboration with the charity the Leadership Centre and is an opportunity

for officers and members to learn together.

For councillors in senior leadership roles, our Leadership Academy is our flagship development programme and is recognised by the Institute of Leadership.

We have so many opportunities for you to develop yourself to be the best councillor you can be – visit [local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development) to find out more.



Change of control

Help is available with changes in political leadership

Following the 1 May local elections, there are now 123 councils in England where no party holds a majority of the seats – up from 109 in 2024.

And while only 23 councils (plus the City of London Corporation and the Council of the Isles of Scilly) had elections this year, most have seen changes in political balance and leadership (see **p30-31**).

The LGA provides member councils with tools and resources to support them through this period of change and help with new political arrangements, whether they are changes of control, no overall control, or changes to councils' portfolio holders and leaders.

Every council will respond in their own way and in the context of their own local situation, but it can also be helpful to learn from the experiences of others.

The LGA continues to talk to a range of leaders and chief executives whose

councils have experienced changes in leadership, and their lessons inform our guidance.

We also offer a range of post-elections support to help smooth political transitions and ensure that councillors and council officers have access to resources and support to deliver effectively in their roles.

This support is provided by our regional support teams and expert councillor and officer peers. It includes: bespoke support and advice tailored to councillor and officer needs; mentoring by expert peers; top-team development for senior political leadership teams; officer and/or councillor development sessions, including induction events for new councillors; mediation to address challenges in relationships between senior councillors and/or council officers; and a peer network for chief executives who experience a change in political leadership (email ami.beeton@local.gov.uk for further information). ●

i You can find out more at [local.gov.uk/changes-political-leadership](https://www.local.gov.uk/changes-political-leadership)

Finance made simple

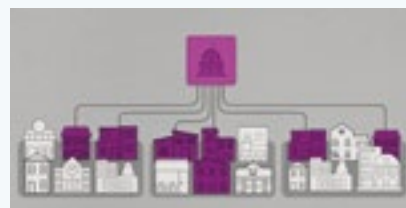
The LGA has launched Finance Unpacked, a new series of 11 animated explainer videos to provide councillors and officers with a basic understanding of some of the key concepts within local government finance and audit.

The videos have been developed in response to demand from councils for finance training resources that are easy to understand and can be used flexibly. They include topics such as 'understanding council tax and business rates', 'reserves and balances', and 'financial sustainability'.

Finance Unpacked provides an accessible entry point for those new in their role, or a refresher for those with more experience. The videos will be of particular relevance to new councillors, as part of their induction process.

By providing councillors with the information and tools to better understand local government finance and audit, the LGA aims to enable enhanced insight and assurance, to better understand financial issues and provide robust challenge and scrutiny.

The LGA's finance improvement team continues to provide an extensive offer to help local authorities manage their finances in these difficult times, including provision of experienced finance associates to provide advice and insight, the Finance Peer Challenge programme, and the Finance Leadership Essentials courses – see [local.gov.uk/our-support/finance](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/finance)





Paul Cluett, MD of Alliance Leisure

ISG's collapse and the road to recovery

Within 100 days of the collapse of construction giant, ISG, Alliance Leisure had every affected project back on track. Alliance Leisure's Managing Director, Paul Cluett, reflects on how it navigated the challenges, the lessons learned and the power of relationships and collaboration.

When ISG Construction

went into administration on September 20, 2024, it had an immediate and profound impact on Alliance Leisure. ISG was the principal contractor for several major leisure projects, worth £250 million, managed through the UK Leisure Framework. The collapse threatened to delay or cancel these projects, jeopardising our clients' investments. We acted quickly to stabilise the situation and get the projects back on track.

I'm immensely proud of how our team and network of professional advisers

“Alliance Leisure’s handling of the situation has been exemplary. Their commitment to getting the site back up and running, coupled with their transparent communication and rapid response, truly stood out. It was everything you could wish for from a true partnership”

Matt Broughton, Director – Growth & Assets, North East Derbyshire District Council

responded. Their resilience and commitment allowed us to find solutions swiftly – demonstrating our reliability in the construction and leisure sectors.

Our first priority was securing the sites and protecting the legal and financial positions of our clients. With projects at various stages, we assessed the impact and engaged with clients to define a clear way forward. Thanks to the UK Leisure Framework and our established relationships, we quickly mobilised alternative contractors, minimising delays and cost increases.

Being a smaller, more agile business, we were able to act fast. We held daily meetings to stay on top of the situation, and our team worked harmoniously to tackle the challenges. Their dedication was essential to moving forward successfully.

Live projects were the most urgent. With ISG's sudden exit, we reviewed each site's status and kept clients informed. By leveraging the UK Leisure Framework, we worked with new contractors to develop Contractor Proposals, allowing work to resume with



Clay Cross Active, Derbyshire, back on track after ISG collapse

minimal delay. This process was complex, but our team's dedication kept every project aligned with client goals.

For pre-construction projects, we focused on ensuring their viability. Alternative contractors conducted cost reviews to reassure clients their investments were secure. We also arranged enabling works to avoid delays.

The success of this recovery was driven by collaboration. Internally, our team pooled resources to deliver under pressure. Externally, our strong partnerships with contractors, consultants, and clients enabled quick action. Transparent communication kept everyone aligned on the steps being taken. The UK Leisure Framework was instrumental, allowing us to navigate the situation with flexibility and confidence.

This experience reinforced core principles for Alliance Leisure. Adaptability is key to thriving in an unpredictable industry, and our relationships with clients and partners proved invaluable. We also appreciated the support from Sport England, which provided additional

funding to keep projects viable.

The UK Leisure Framework also demonstrated its value, helping us respond quickly. Finally, the professionalism of our team not only minimised the impacts of the crisis but strengthened our future processes and partnerships.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. Within 100 days, all affected projects were back on track with minimal cost increases and disruption. This outcome reflects our approach and the resilience of our team. Moving forward, we remain focused on delivering these projects to the highest standards, ensuring long-term value for our clients and communities.

Many ISG employees and subcontractors have also found new roles on Alliance projects. We thank our clients and partners for their trust and collaboration – together, we've turned a potential crisis into a success. ●



AllianceLeisure

Developing future leaders

Solving real-life challenges for councils

The LGA's annual competition for council officers is approaching its final stages.

Back in December (**first** 700), we announced that the Local Government Challenge had once again recruited 10 talented officers to participate in five real-life, council-hosted challenges throughout 2025.

This initiative aims to foster innovation and leadership within local government by providing participants with the opportunity to tackle pressing issues faced by councils across the country.

At stake is the prestigious £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart Scholarship, awarded each year in honour of former LGA Chairman Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart OBE.

As **first** was going to press, the 2025 cohort was completing the last of five challenges and we are pleased to provide an update on the journey so far.

This year's LG Challenge began in January at Buckinghamshire Council. Each challenge varies in topic, and Buckinghamshire's focused on the role town centre regeneration plans could play in retaining and re-attracting talent across the county.

The council emphasised that regeneration is a significant priority, with plans to

revitalise larger towns such as Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe.

Buckinghamshire's ambitious vision aims to make these towns more attractive and functional for residents, businesses, and visitors, driving economic growth, enhancing quality of life and ensuring sustainable development.

Team Ascend put forward three key strategies: an upskilling strategy to grow future talent, creating business hubs to attract businesses to town centres, and showcasing local industries such as film, manufacturing and the Westcott Space Centre.

“The initiative provides the opportunity to tackle pressing issues faced by councils across the country”

On the other hand, Team Visionaries focused on fostering community and inclusivity through networks and capitalising on the unique selling points of county towns. After careful deliberation, the judges favoured Team Visionaries' ideas for their ability to be implemented across the county, awarding them the first win of the 2025 programme.

The second challenge took place at Nottinghamshire County Council in February, where the cohort was tasked with addressing recommendations in a joint strategic needs assessment – particularly around poor mental health as both a barrier to work and a challenge for those already in employment.

The council's 10-year vision for a healthy, prosperous and greener future for residents includes tackling disparities in employment and economic activity rates, as well as addressing long-term health conditions, disabilities and mental health issues.

Team Visionaries proposed developing strategic community hubs for mental health and employment support, a good employment charter starting with Nottinghamshire County Council and rolling out to local employers, and fostering regional partnership working.

Meanwhile, Team Ascend pitched the 'Nottinghamshire Outstanding Work (NOW)' programme, which integrates employment support into the council's core business. The judges were impressed by Team Ascend's strategic approach, awarding them the win for this round.

In March, the third challenge took the teams to Stroud District Council, where they explored how effectively its recently developed community engagement principles could be implemented and further developed within the context of the council's 'Fit for the Future' modernisation programme.

Teams were asked to prepare both a presentation and an action plan outlining how these principles could be actioned by everyone at the council.

Team Visionaries proposed re-evaluating



The cohort – pictured at Harlow Council – have now completed four out of five of their regional challenges

the council's community engagement principles into three coherent stages: create, collaborate, and consolidate. Their plans aimed to embed community engagement throughout the council, ensuring it sits within all roles rather than in silos.

Team Ascend recommended redefining the existing principles as a process and creating four new overarching principles: learn, listen, involve, and empower.

They argued that distilling the process into four core principles retains the work already undertaken, while providing the council with clear principles that can be understood and embedded across services.

This time the judges felt Team Ascend's proposal best aligned with the council's values and behaviours and gave them the win for the challenge.

The cohort headed east for challenge four, which took place at Harlow Council in April, this time focusing on procurement.

Following the new opportunities afforded by the Procurement Act 2023, the teams were tasked with developing a

new procurement approach that allows for agile tendering to better meet council needs. The focus was on speeding up processes, quantifying added value, and creating social value linked to the council's corporate missions.

Team Ascend proposed a 'cultural procurement shift' for the council, centred on four Ds: define, design, deliver, and discover. Their approach encompassed the entire procurement process, ensuring all officers have a responsibility for the life-cycle of procurement. They emphasised social value and the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Team Visionaries pitched redesigning the procurement process by introducing a new gold standard called the 'Heart of Harlow,' which would fast-track decision-making and use artificial intelligence (AI) to move away from paperwork and emails toward a fully digital service.

The judges were impressed by both teams' proposals, but awarded the win to Team Ascend for their comprehensive approach.

"Four finalists will go head to head at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool in July"

Throughout the competition, contestants are rotated to ensure diverse experiences and perspectives; and are scored individually on their innovation and problem solving, political awareness, business acumen, team working, communication, and their ability to inspire and motivate others.

As **first** was going to press, the cohort was in the North West, completing its fifth and final challenge, hosted by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Once all five challenges have been completed, four finalists will be identified and – supported by their fellow competitors – travel to the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool in early July.

There, they will go head-to-head as they pitch their individual proposals to delegates and judges in the hope of winning the coveted scholarship. The winner will be announced at an awards ceremony in the conference's Innovation Zone on 2 July. ●

i To find out more about the Local Government Challenge, please visit local.gov.uk/lg-challenge. See local.gov.uk/conference to book your place at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool from 1-3 July

Maintaining our highways

New councillor guide on maximising the value of investment



Ollie Niddrie is Principal Consultant at Rebel

For many councillors, one issue consistently tops the inbox: potholes.

It's a visible, tangible concern for residents, and a persistent challenge for councils.

The size of the problem is daunting. Recent estimates suggest the backlog is approaching £17 billion – and rising.

It's a figure that underlines the scale of the issue and the pressure local

authorities face in trying to address it with limited resources.

That's why the LGA, along with industry partners, is calling on the Government to increase highways maintenance funding in the upcoming Spending Review.

As the Department for Transport negotiates with the Treasury, a key question is whether councils will finally receive the long-term funding certainty that bodies such as National Highways and Network Rail already enjoy.

But while funding remains a critical constraint, councils must also focus on getting the maximum value from each pound they currently spend by exploring every opportunity to boost productivity.

To support this, we recently worked with the LGA to produce a guide for councillors, highlighting best practice and innovative approaches, backed up by case studies from across the country.

One of the strongest messages from the guide is that prevention is key.

Keeping water out of road surfaces is critical to prolonging their life. It is more cost-effective than repeatedly reacting to potholes after they've formed.

Planned, proactive maintenance delivers far better value than emergency reactive repairs.

Every council is different, with its own priorities and challenges. So, our guide breaks down the different repair methods, their features, and factors to consider when deciding what's right for your area.

The real challenge lies in delivering the right treatment, in the right place, at the right time – a complex and shifting puzzle. But new technologies are increasingly helping to solve it.

Last year, the Prime Minister highlighted how artificial intelligence (AI) can support highways maintenance. Vehicle-mounted cameras scan roads while AI analyses the footage.

This can detect early warning signs like cracks; track the growth of defects; diagnose the depth of potholes; recommend repair methods; and help officers plan a schedule of repairs.

While some might say, 'we don't need AI to tell us where the potholes are', this technology provides high-quality data to officers. This allows councils to prioritise limited funding more effectively and deliver better-targeted repairs.

This helps save money by identifying issues before they become more serious and costly. In some cases, the AI-estimated depth of a pothole enables officers to act without sending someone to inspect it, streamlining the process from complaint to repair.

Technology also supports safety and efficiency.

Traditional inspections – especially on high-speed or high-traffic roads – can be dangerous and disruptive. AI-supported road scans can minimise the need for manual inspections.

These issues are just one part of the puzzle. Other issues such as a mature asset management system and good procurement are key to delivering good outcomes for residents.

Our new guide is available on the LGA's website www.local.gov.uk/publications, and we'd be happy to discuss its findings and how they could apply to your council (email oliver.niddrie@rebelgroup.com). ●



Breaking the cycle of violence

Local initiatives are helping tackle knife crime



Councillor Tom Hunt is Vice-Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board

The Safer and Stronger Communities Board has been closely examining the issue of knife crime, a complex problem that impacts individuals, families, and entire communities.

The devastating consequences of knife crime require more than just stricter laws or enforcement; we must address the root causes of violence and the conditions that make carrying knives seem like a necessary option for some people.

While measures such as banning certain types of knives and increasing penalties for illegal sales are essential, they alone will not resolve the crisis.

We must look deeper at the societal

issues driving some people to carry knives, including fear and insecurity, which often stem from a lack of opportunity and support.

A key factor contributing to the rise in knife crime is the belief, especially among some young people, that carrying a knife will provide protection from violence. This mentality fosters a dangerous cycle where violence begets more violence.

Without addressing the underlying causes of this fear, such as poverty, lack of education, and limited opportunities for employment, we risk continuing the cycle of knife-related violence.

Local initiatives – such as Hackney's outreach programmes, Liverpool's multi-agency operations, and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's awareness campaigns – have demonstrated the power of community-based interventions.

These efforts, which focus on educating young people, offering support, and engaging with the community and law enforcement, have shown positive results.

However, these programmes need sustained funding and support to create lasting change.

One of the most promising strategies to tackle knife crime is the public health

approach, which has shown success in Glasgow through the city's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

By treating violence as a disease that affects communities, rather than focusing solely on punishment, this model has led to reduced violent crime and fewer hospital admissions for knife-related injuries.

Wales has recently adopted a similar approach and places in England should too – focusing on early intervention, education, and support to break the cycle of violence before it starts.

Another critical issue that must be addressed is the disproportionate impact of knife crime on young black males and people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Tackling the social determinants of crime, such as unemployment, inadequate education, and limited access to youth services, is essential in creating an environment where young people are not drawn into violence.

By addressing these inequalities, we can ensure a more just and equitable society.

A sustained, multifaceted approach – including prevention, education, rehabilitation, and law enforcement – offers the best chance to reduce knife crime in the long term.

The UK Government's goal of halving knife crime in 10 years is ambitious and achievable if we focus on addressing the root causes rather than just the symptoms.

This will require additional resource and capacity for places to design the right approaches for their area that provide pathways away from violence.

Ultimately, to create a safer society, we must not only enforce laws but also tackle the underlying issues that lead some people to carry knives. ●



For more on the LGA's work on community safety, please visit www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety



Managing cyber incidents

Working with elected members is vital, says new LGA guidance

Cyber attacks have a devastating impact on councils and their local communities; they interrupt the delivery of vital local services, risk eroding public trust, and are expensive to recover from.

While there are comprehensive frameworks and guidance available, local government officers have told the LGA they were missing something more immediate – practical, accessible support suitable for non-technical staff, something officers could turn to in the middle of a crisis, especially when access to systems might be limited.

The LGA has set out to fill that gap with our 'Cyber incident grab bag' – a tool designed to support councils through the early stages of responding to a serious cyber incident. The guidance helps councils to anticipate the likely challenges they will face, find support and

authoritative information, and chart their course through to a sustainable recovery.

It does not replace a council's existing business continuity, disaster recovery and emergency plans, but aims to support them, by empowering officers to act more confidently in those critical initial moments of a cyber incident.

The grab bag helps officers make decisions quickly, work as a team and avoid missteps when pressure is high and information is limited, aiming to complement existing support, such as the National Cyber Security Centre's Cyber Assessment Framework.

Developed with consultants Public Digital, whose team brought direct experience of navigating major council cyber incidents, the grab bag also draws on expertise, experience and learnings from across the sector and government partners.

It sets out four key early stages to incident response, starting with identifying the incident and taking first steps, and moving to building confidence and designing your recovery path.

Across these four stages, the guidance focuses on areas that councils told us they

'Members are likely to be under lots of pressure from residents looking to them for reassurance'

struggle with, summarised in seven core 'themes'. These include 'healthy teaming' to support staff wellbeing under intense stress, and practical steps for protecting data.

Another theme highlights how working with elected members is a vital part of a council's response to a cyber incident.

Members are likely to be under lots of pressure from residents, who will be looking to them for reassurance on service impacts, continuity and recovery of services, and other concerns, such as the safety of their personal data.

By engaging well with councillors and supporting them in their important role as representatives of local communities, officers can equip them to achieve the swiftest and safest recovery possible.

Members may also be asked to respond to media coverage – so should be included in communications strategies – and need to be aware of the continued risks posed by hackers.

Member casework is also likely to be affected, with increased levels of contact from residents if council services are hit badly. Preparing for this, and monitoring casework to ensure responses are being managed effectively, will help to sustain confidence in the response and recovery work.

The grab bag is free to access via the LGA website. It has been built to be used, shared and adapted, and will be regularly updated as more guidance, support, learning and user feedback become available.

While no single resource is a complete solution, we believe this collaborative, comprehensive and organisation-wide tool is a vital step in strengthening local government's collective resilience against cyber threats. ●

i The 'Cyber incident grab bag for local authorities' is available for free at bit.ly/3FeNHxC. For more information, or to feed back on this tool, please email cyberanddigital@local.gov.uk

Tackling recruitment challenges

Evaluation shows national campaign is making a difference



Councillor Abi Brown OBE is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Councils in England face significant recruitment challenges, with nine in 10 reporting difficulties filling staff vacancies according to the LGA's 2022 workforce survey.

The government-funded and award-winning 'Make a Difference: Work for Your Local Council' campaign set out to help councils tackle these challenges.

Co-produced by the LGA, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace), regional employers' organisations and councils, it showcases the huge variety of meaningful and fulfilling roles in local government – from planning to social care, and environmental health to financial management – and how they make a difference in local communities.

Following a successful pilot in the North East of England in 2024, the first national 'Make

a Difference' campaign was rolled out late last year and into January 2025, with carefully researched advertising on billboards, radio and social media, supported by a dedicated website and a toolkit for councils.

I'm now delighted to report that an external evaluation has demonstrated its effectiveness.

The evaluation included: a survey of 2,000 residents, before and after the campaign; a post-campaign survey of councils, which garnered 126 responses; and analysis of recruitment data from 105 councils.

During the campaign period (November 2024 to January 2025), there were 114 million 'impressions' across all media channels combined, which exceeded our expectations in terms of reach and engagement.

In research with the public, people who could recall seeing the campaign felt much more positively about their councils on all dimensions researched. They were also more than three times more likely to consider applying for a job, than those with no recall.

Councils were able to use the campaign in their own recruitment via our 'Make a Difference' campaign toolkit.



More than two-thirds (222) accessed the toolkit, and more than one-third (116) used the materials on their own social media channels during the campaign period.

In the council survey, 86 per cent of respondents stated that the campaign had supported their recruitment efforts, with councils that used the toolkit saying recruitment was easier.

The 'Make a Difference' website (www.localcounciljobs.gov.uk) lists all councils and combined authorities in England, and was visited by 241,511 active users during the campaign period, generating 147,094 postcode searches to find council jobs.

Most importantly, the campaign has contributed to an increase in views of, and applications for, council jobs.

Average online applications per job increased year on year from 10.9 to 14.9, peaking at 16.6 in January 2025, compared with 11.7 in January 2024.

The positive findings from this evaluation reflect the

strong partnership working with regional employer organisations, and the high level of participation from councils in helping to shape the campaign.

The strength of this collaboration has been recognised with two awards for the pilot phase in the North East, from the Local Government Chronicle and the Public Services People Managers Association (PPMA).

Funding has been secured from the UK Government for 2025/26, providing a fantastic opportunity to build on the first year's success and learn from the evaluation.

This includes creating a more easily editable toolkit for councils, and the creation of materials that target young people.

It's a great time to get involved; the LGA will continue engaging with councils and regional employers through events over the summer to shape the future of the campaign. ●

i The 'Make a Difference, Work for Your Local Council' campaign toolkit remains live at www.localcounciljobs.gov.uk. For further information, please email makeadifference@local.gov.uk

An ordinary home

Mainstream housing for people with a learning disability

We know that people with a learning disability want the same as the rest of us – ‘to live in the place we call home, with the people and things we love, in communities where we look out for each other, doing the things that matter to us’.

Councils are key to helping people with a learning disability find housing that supports them to live a good, ordinary life in the community, and are at the forefront of making this possible, despite the current housing shortage.

Doing so effectively not only improves the quality of life of people with a learning disability, but can also result in savings for hard-pressed adult social care budgets.

Partners in Care and Health (PCH) – a partnership between the LGA and

the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), which supports councils to improve how they deliver adult social care services – has published two reports to help councils with this work.

‘Best practice and insights report on improving housing choice for people with a learning disability’ provides evidence of council good practice and insights in relation to people with a learning disability having access to, and living in, ‘mainstream’ housing (see right).

‘Developing Shared Lives for people with a learning disability’ aims to support councils to enable more people with a learning disability to benefit from the ‘Shared Lives’ model of care and support.

Despite the challenging housing market, councils are making ordinary housing a



reality for many people with a learning disability, and we hope these new reports will help many more do so.

See below and right for more information, and read the reports in full at www.local.gov.uk/publications. ●

Shared homes, shared lives

PCH worked with Shared Lives Plus, the national charity representing the Shared Lives sector, to develop guidance on good practice in developing and growing the Shared Lives model of care and support.

The model involves a carefully approved Shared Lives carer being matched with a person who needs support, who then lives with or regularly visits the carer.

The carers are self-employed, but are recruited, trained and monitored by Shared Lives schemes, which are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

In October 2023, the CQC rated 97 per cent of Shared Lives schemes in England as good or outstanding, compared with 83 per cent for

the wider social care sector.

Real stories demonstrate the ways in which people such as Joshua and Elle (pictured, right) and Michael (see bit.ly/44NDiU0) live richer, fuller lives in Shared Lives schemes.

Shared Lives offers high-quality support while costing less than most other forms of adult social care.

A 2023 ADASS survey found that 87 per cent of directors of adult social care thought that ‘greater availability of Shared Lives would reduce or significantly reduce adult social care expenditure’.

The most recent research shows that Shared Lives can save between £12,000 and £26,000 per person



© Lindy Rogers

per year for people with a learning disability (compared with supported living and residential care).

Despite the proven ability of the model to save money, the financial pressures on council budgets can make upfront investment difficult, as establishing or growing a new Shared Lives service involves

overheads. These include staff costs, Shared Lives carer training, marketing and communications, and ongoing support for Shared Lives carers.

However, the report outlines the ways in which a strategy can create the ideal conditions to drive Shared Lives growth – see www.local.gov.uk/publications.

'Ordinary' housing options

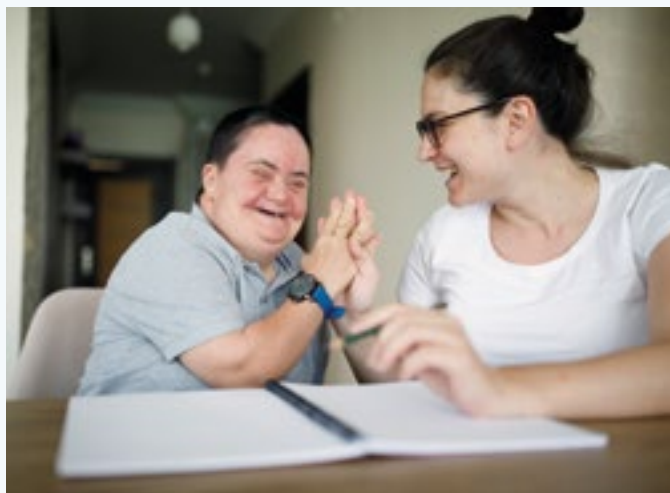
PCH's 'Best practice and insights report on improving housing choice for people with a learning disability' draws on discussions with people with a learning disability and their supporters, and 15 councils.

As part of producing the report, the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (a dynamic community of more than 15,000 housing, health and social care professionals) engaged with people with a learning disability and their family members – with the support of the charity Learning Disability England – to understand what people are seeking from an 'ordinary' home.

The report includes hints and tips, as well as case studies of how councils can help people with a learning disability access 'mainstream' housing – for example, by renting from a social housing landlord, a housing association or a council, renting from a private sector landlord, being a homeowner, or living in housing that has been arranged by a family member.

The report covers:

- the types of housing in which people with a learning disability live, including people who are eligible for adult social care and those who are not
- the barriers to people with a learning disability accessing and living in mainstream housing
- the practical action that councils can and are taking to address these barriers
- the case for change, setting out the benefits



for people with a learning disability and for councils if more people lived in mainstream housing.

Councils are already doing lots – for example, Dorset Council has 'flags' on its register to indicate that an applicant has a learning disability and/or other additional needs (such as for an adapted property), enabling the council to be better informed when matching people with housing.

Councils are also collecting detailed information about the housing needs and associated care and support needs of people with a learning disability.

Warwickshire's district and borough councils, for example, have developed a housing-needs referral form to supplement the main housing register

application form, which can be used when a person has care or support needs (including a learning disability).

There is also the potential for councils to aggregate this data to provide evidence of housing need to inform local housing strategies.

Some councils, such as Cornwall, have developed local housing plans and strategies in relation to people with a learning disability that promote access to mainstream housing as an option alongside, for example, the use of supported housing and supported living.

Other councils have helped private landlords to recognise that people with a learning disability typically make good long-term tenants. Wirral Council has used its local private sector landlord forums to engage with private landlords in this way.

Producing accessible information and advice goes a long way. Warwickshire County Council (with its district and borough council partners) has produced an 'easy read' guide for people with a learning disability, while Wigan Council has a housing options guide specifically targeted at families and carers.

Engaging with local housing providers can also help. Birmingham City Council uses a local forum with social housing providers to encourage them to make a range of reasonable adjustments – such as installing appropriate soundproofing – so that more people with a learning disability can access general needs social housing.

Some councils fund low-level types of support to help residents manage a tenancy successfully. For example, Telford and Wrekin Council commissions a housing association to do this.

Digital technology can also help people with a learning disability to live in mainstream housing. Surrey County Council has worked with support providers and a technology company to enable people to move from supported housing into mainstream housing, where they receive paid-for support complemented by the extensive use of technology to assist them to live independently.

i LGA and ADASS are Partners in Care and Health (PCH), supporting councils to improve the way they deliver adult social care services. Information about PCH's support offer in respect of people with a learning disability and autistic people is available at www.local.gov.uk/our-support/partners-care-and-health/autistic-learning-disabilities

National new councillors' welcome event

Thursday 19 June 2025, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

The LGA would like to invite all newly elected councillors to our annual welcome event on 19 June.

You will hear from a panel of experienced councillors and senior officers about the work of the LGA and how we can help you in your role now as you develop throughout your time as a councillor.

At this virtual event, funded by UK Government, you will also hear about the LGA's priorities and national issues affecting local government. The experienced panel will share personal reflections and advice on how to navigate the complexities and challenges of your new role.

Book today! local.gov.uk/councillor-hub



first

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

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



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



**Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE is
Leader of the Welsh LGA**

As we look ahead to welcoming delegates to the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) annual conference in Llandudno in a few weeks, it is impossible to ignore the parlous state of democracy.

In recent times, politics has been increasingly characterised by polarisation, uncertainty and crisis. Headlines are dominated by resurgent authoritarianism, geopolitical conflict and budgetary woes.

Yet it is in times such as these that local democracy emerges as a foundation of stability, accountability and practical governance.

A democratically elected local government sits at the frontline of public service delivery.

Councils play a vital role in shaping our communities, responding to local needs, and delivering services that people rely on every day. They occupy a governance level which is most closely – and directly – linked, and accountable to, our communities.

This is where potholes are filled, social care is provided, schools are funded, housing is allocated, and decisions are made about green spaces, transport, and public safety.

These are not abstract policy debates – they are the tangible elements of daily life for our residents. And therein lies the power of our councils.

But of course, we don't operate in a vacuum.

The relationship between central and local governments is vital to ensure that our residents', communities' and businesses' needs are met.

In Wales, we have long had a strong, constructive relationship with the Welsh Government, based on the principle of social partnership, which has led to better outcomes for our communities.

In the same vein, we have welcomed a step change in the new UK Government's attitude towards the public sector that we will look forward to building on in the future.

Nevertheless, we know that local



Llandudno will be hosting the WLGA's annual conference

Local democracy: a constant in an uncertain world

government across the UK faces myriad challenges of its own, not least the social care funding crisis and ever-shrinking council budgets, responding to the impacts of climate change, and meeting the increasing needs of an ageing population.

None of these issues can be solved alone, and will require a concerted effort co-designed by local, devolved and UK governments.

The Prime Minister has rightly identified the need for democratic renewal. Investing in strong, autonomous local councils is a necessity to continue to deliver for

residents and to seek to curb the cynicism that has besieged our politics for far too long.

As politics becomes more complex and contested, local government remains one of the few spaces where pragmatic, responsive, and participatory politics is still possible.

It may not capture international headlines, but it holds something rarer – the trust and engagement of real people in real places.

And in a time of global disorder, that may be democracy's most valuable asset. ●

i The WLGA's annual conference – the biggest event in the Welsh local government calendar – will take place in person at Venue Cymru (Llandudno) on 18 and 19 June. Almost one year on from the UK general election and with less than a year to go until the Senedd election in spring 2026, delegates will hear from leading politicians from local and national governments, and representatives from academia, business and the third sector. To find out more and book your place, please visit www.wlga.wales/wlga-annual-conference-2025

GROUP LEADERS



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

Local elections and leadership hustings

Congratulations to all our members standing up for our communities and succeeding in the local elections.

Our LGA Independent Group maintained our Independent numbers and gained 45 additional Green councillors, increasing our total to 3,370 councillors, which is 19.5 per cent of all councillors in LGA membership.

On a personal note, I retained my Lincolnshire County Council seat. I also stood for Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire, in

a team effort supported by Independents across the region's 10 councils, overtaking two national parties, including the Liberal Democrats. We have also been working hard to ensure there is a place for everyone in the LGA, and a big part of that is helping to coordinate the new Reform UK Group office.

In addition, we will be reviewing what this means for our places on the LGA's policy boards, alongside the LGA's governance review, which has made further recommendations.

If you are a newly elected Independent or Green councillor, please do get in touch with our office. The LGA also offers a range of helpful resources online within our dedicated Councillor Hub (see www.local.gov.uk/councillor-hub), and is holding its annual national new councillors welcome event on 19 June, from 5-7pm (online), introducing the LGA and the role of the Independent Group Office (see www.local.gov.uk/events).

"We have been working hard to ensure there is a place for everyone"

Ahead of our group's AGM at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool, from 1-3 July, group members wishing to propose a motion should provide a draft by 1 June.

I will soon be moving on from my position as the LGA's Independent Group leader. I trust I will be passing it on to some capable hands that will continue to uphold values of integrity and respect. Please cast your vote!

We are also hosting a group hustings on 2 June (6-9pm), at the LGA's London headquarters. If you wish to attend, please get in touch (email independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk).

i For more information about the LGA's political groups, see www.local.gov.uk

From devo to delivery



Councillor Louise Gittins is Chair of the LGA

Following the 1 May local elections, I want to recognise and send my personal commiserations to colleagues across the political spectrum who were unsuccessful at the ballot box.

I understand how much effort goes into fighting elections and the huge personal sacrifices we make so that we can serve our local people to the best of our abilities. Thank you for your service.

To the mayors and hundreds of new councillors elected for the first time, welcome to the local government family, and please take advantage of the LGA's support (see www.local.gov.uk/councillor-hub).



Councillors and officers – new and old – are dedicated public servants.

While we may represent different political parties, or indeed choose to stand independently, we are all united in our determination to make a difference to our communities.

However, to improve the lives of our residents and create thriving places, we need support from national government.

The LGA continues to highlight the

pressures facing councils and, ahead of the Spending Review on 11 June, we have called on the Government to plug the funding gap and deliver on its commitment to multi-year settlements.

We have also been clear to Government that councils can deliver the solutions to the national challenges we face. We want to seize the opportunities ahead of us with enhanced powers, further responsibility and autonomy for our areas.

Devolution – delivered in the right way and in genuine partnership with local leaders – can make this a reality, and it was a pleasure to discuss these issues with council leaders and mayors at the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in Leeds in late May (see **p10**).

With even more flexibility at a local level, we can go further to fulfil our essential role and deliver services that meet the needs of residents now and in the future.



Councillor Bev Craig is Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

Creating a strong sense of place

Every year, voters head to the polls to exercise their democratic right and decide on their local representatives.

Whether those votes are cast in support of a political party, or for the individual's record of delivering for their community, councillors play a crucial role in shaping the place in which their residents want to live and thrive.

We are all aware of the cost pressures placed on councils, partially because of the rising costs of statutory services such as temporary accommodation and social care.

These services are crucial to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind and can participate in our communities. Councils continue to be at the forefront of this care. However, councils play another central role.

They are makers of place, ensuring

“Councils are building homes not just houses, and creating cohesion with community spaces”

that every area has its distinct identity, considering different priorities and allowing shifts in the makeup of an area, while preserving historic stories for generations to come.

Councils are building homes not just houses, encouraging play by tidying parks, building literacy with libraries, and creating cohesion with community spaces.

A strong sense of place encourages businesses, community groups, families and individuals to contribute to their area, fostering a sense of belonging that leads to good citizenship.

My very best wishes to all Labour councillors elected for the coming year. I know you will be tireless champions for your communities.



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

Importance of speaking as one voice

The local elections were a bruising and depressing night for the Conservative Group. One by one, we lost incredibly good, hard-working colleagues who lost through no fault of their own.

The brutality of British politics means it is often local councillors who suffer because of the decisions made by those in Westminster.

Those Conservative councillors who we lost have an impeccable amount

“It's with this approach that we secure real results for our member councils”

of knowledge and I know they will be back soon.

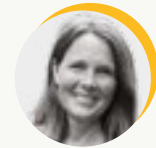
But as local government starts to operate in a new political landscape, we must remember the importance of the LGA and the sector speaking as one voice. It's with this approach that we secure real results for our member councils and for the wider benefit of the residents they serve.

Take our legal team at the LGA, for example: they recently secured £20 million for those councils, in all regions and tiers, who joined our collective action against Visa and Mastercard; and are currently fighting for compensation for those councils affected by price fixing by a cartel of truck manufacturers.

Also, because of LGA lobbying, we secured an additional £1.1 billion extended packaging producer responsibility funding for 2025/26, and a six-month extension to the Household Support Fund, amounting to an extra £421 million for our member councils.

Now more than ever before local government must speak as one voice.

GROUP LEADERS



Councillor Vikki Slade MP is an LGA Liberal Democrat Group Vice-President

Some stunning local election results

As the dust settles on the 1 May local elections, the work continues at the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group – including supporting Lib Dem groups facing changed circumstances following their elections.

We have three new majority Lib Dem administrations – Shropshire, Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire – bringing our total of majority Lib Dem councils to 40 (we lead another 30 in a coalition or alliance arrangement).

The elections saw 370 Lib Dem councillors elected, 163 of these being gains. As **first** was going to press, we were also hoping to have Liberal Democrat-led administrations in Devon, Wiltshire, Cornwall and Gloucestershire confirmed.

“We are all now sailing in uncharted waters”

Elsewhere, Lib Dem groups have found themselves the official opposition to new Reform UK administrations, as the Tory and Labour groups collapsed. We are the main opposition in places such as Kent, for example. We are all now sailing in uncharted waters!

Our commiserations to our excellent Lib Dem group on Durham Council, where we gained a seat and form the main opposition after a term leading the council as part of an alliance administration. I know they will be holding Reform to account.

At the LGA, the Liberal Democrat Group again increased our vote share. We will use this extra influence to make the argument for a Liberal approach to local government – one that stresses communities working together rather than the vision of division we see from others. ●

Research on regional inequalities



Professor Rebecca Riley is the Director of the Local Policy Innovation Partnership Hub

The Local Policy Innovation Partnership (LPIP) project is a significant initiative aimed at addressing regional inequalities and fostering sustainable growth through research, innovation and partnership.

Funded by UK Research and Innovation, the project brings together local authorities, businesses, communities and researchers to tackle

local challenges and create lasting impacts.

There are four LPIPs around the UK, in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In Wales, Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales focuses on developing an inclusive and sustainable rural economy (see bit.ly/43CW7YS).

This involves providing local governments, businesses, and communities with the evidence needed to make informed decisions that promote prosperity and reduce inequality.

One of the key challenges addressed by the Welsh LPIP is the 'rural premium', whereby people on low incomes in rural areas pay more for essential services compared

with wealthier households.

By exploring innovative solutions, the partnership aims to alleviate this burden and improve the quality of life for rural residents.

In England, the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership prioritises inclusive growth, sustainable living, and data analytics, particularly benefiting marginalised communities (see y-pern.org.uk/ypip).

It strives to bring together academia, policymakers and communities for informed decision-making through place-based initiatives exploring inclusive business practices, creative industries and climate action.

The LPIP Hub, led by the University of Birmingham,

plays a crucial role in coordinating these efforts. It seeks to bridge the gap between local and national policy development by linking policymakers across geographical scales and policy domains.

The hub also works on building confidence, capability and capacity in place-based policymaking and public service delivery.

By fostering a collaborative environment, the hub ensures that innovative practices are scaled up and that the collective knowledge base is deepened. ●

i To find out more, please visit the LPIP Hub at lpihub.bham.ac.uk

AI 'won't fix councils'



Councillor's name and address supplied

I read 'Unlocking the potential' (first 702) looking for some indication of what artificial intelligence (AI) might offer local authorities and, unfortunately, found only platitudes diverting us from the real challenges facing councils and the country.

The reality is that councils are about people and providing real, frontline services and hands-on interactions – helping the sick or elderly, filling potholes, emptying bins, protecting the environment, and so on.

There isn't any shortage of information about how to do things better; the problem lies in the lack of interest in that information.

Looking after an elderly person with mobility problems isn't completed more quickly if you can talk into your phone in expectation that ChatGPT will convert your conversation into pretty sentences.

Digital inclusion does not reduce loneliness or isolation; if it did, then all those virtual meetings since COVID-19 would have led to a more functional and happier workforce, and more contented residents.

AI will not suddenly make council management interested in the views of its workforce or willing to look for best practice elsewhere to



inform their decision-making.

When I look at the scary figures for young people not in education, employment or training, or the increase in mental health problems, or the reality that most council funding is now spent on social care, I do not see a data-analysis gap. What I see is a lack of willingness of senior management and elected politicians to challenge orthodox thinking.

Reports and processes do matter, as do constitutions, regulatory frameworks and strategies. But unless you have a motivated workforce, led by inspiring and visionary leaders who are keen to learn from best practice, wherever it is found, your local authority is treading water and going nowhere.

Expecting AI to fix councils is like using a different fork and expecting it to make food taste better. ●



A broad church



Councillor Tim Oliver is Chair of the County Councils Network

In the aftermath of the local elections – perhaps the most consequential in recent history – the County Councils Network's (CCN) political proportionality has changed.

While to outsiders it may feel like a much-changed CCN, the reality is that we have always been a broad church, not only incorporating the views of a diverse range of political parties and councillors, but the differing needs of unique counties across England.

With new councillors come fresh ways of thinking, and we're keen to engage new and old faces on their ideas as we begin to shape our advocacy over the next year and beyond.

You can read about the CCN's latest priorities, research, and lobbying in our Councillors Guide 2025, which also has an introduction to the network and explains how you can get involved. It is available on our website, at www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications.

But in the short term, there are many key issues looming large on the horizon, many of which will be of real importance to all county and unitary councils.

We know that local residents want well-run, efficient and easily accessible services.

Therefore, the funding of local services will continue to be uppermost in council leaders' minds – and the Spending Review on 11 June is pivotal in setting out how much will be available to councils.

Having set out clear evidence that adult social care, children's services and special educational needs

(SEND) services are the 'big three' areas that are driving costs over the course of this Parliament, the network will be making the strongest possible case for additional funding for county and unitary councils over the course of the Spending Review.

The Spending Review will also set out how much will likely be available for re-distribution in the fair funding review. Here, it is vital that no county and unitary council loses out in funding.

But we recognise that the fiscal circumstances for the Chancellor are tight, and that is why we will be continuing to make the case for public sector reform to go alongside funding: ensuring that any investment into local government sees the public pound go as far as possible.

We know that major changes are coming in adult social care, children's services and SEND, and it is vital that councils have a strong financial foundation on which to then drive forward reforms that

address demand and soaring costs in these services.

Away from the big service areas, an increased pot of money will also enable councils to improve the 'bread and butter' services; the ones residents see and use every day, such as roads maintenance, street lighting, and libraries.

For the CCN, we are also preparing work in a variety of areas, such as economic growth, devolution, bus services and much more, while also supporting our county council members to put forward sustainable proposals for local government reorganisation.

Rest assured, we will continue to do our all to represent the issues that matter most to county and unitary councils, so local councillors can deliver for residents and businesses. ●

i The CCN's annual conference is from 16-18 November, see www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk for more information

A new multi-party system



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

The council elections on 1 May opened a fissure in the pattern of local government in England.

Everybody assumed that Reform UK was going to do well but the scale of its victory came as a surprise, with the party winning nearly 700 council seats from a standing start.

Much of the discussion among other political parties since has been about the potential longer-term implications of the Reform surge.

However, Nigel Farage's party already has a significant role to play as the majority or largest group in no fewer than 14 of the 23 councils which had elections – not to mention its success in winning inaugural elections to two new mayoral combined authorities (Greater Lincolnshire, and Hull and East Yorkshire).

More than eight million electors (about a fifth of the English total) will now have a chance to judge the performance of Reform in office, and how it grapples with the funding and delivery issues that have plagued local government in recent years.

Many of the new Reform councillors will – unlike ex-MP Andrea Jenkyns, the

new Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire – be political novices.

The Conservatives lost every council they were defending, including Buckinghamshire, which was retained by the party even in the dog days of the mid-1990s, when it held just 13 local authorities across the country.

The Conservatives have now been overtaken by the Liberal Democrats in terms of total councils controlled – 35 to their 40 – for the first time in nearly 30 years.

In five counties – Devon, Gloucestershire, Kent, Lancashire and Warwickshire – the number of Conservative councillors is now in single figures, in sharp contrast to the clear majorities secured four years ago.

Elsewhere, some consolation was provided by Paul Bristow, the former Conservative MP for Peterborough, who secured election as the third Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority.

Labour, too, had a poor election, notwithstanding that it was coming from a low base after 2021.

Like the Conservatives, it lost two-thirds of the seats it was defending and failed to replicate its performance at last year's general election. Its huge majority then, based on a modest vote share, can in part be attributed to being the beneficiary of a split vote among its opponents. It won the odd seat in a similar way this time, but in general did not do as well as hoped.

In Cornwall, in a sign of this fickleness,

a mere four Labour councillors were elected in the 87-member authority; last year, the party won four of the county's six parliamentary constituencies.

Our calculation of the 'national equivalent vote' (NEV) at this election – a measure of how the various parties would have fared if these elections had taken place in every part of the country – puts Labour on just 19 per cent, by far the lowest we have ever recorded for the party.

Labour just hung on to local mayoralties in North Tyneside and Doncaster, even as it was swept aside in the latter by Reform at council level.

Labour also retained the West of England Combined Authority mayoralty, but there, too, is an example of the impact of our now multi-party system.

Helen Godwin came first with 25 per cent of the total vote on a turnout of 30 per cent. In other words, her mandate rests on the positive endorsement of fewer than one in 13 eligible electors.

The Liberal Democrats did little better in overall votes than four years ago but were more successful than Labour in retaining support from last July.

In the counties they targeted they, like Reform, gained seats from both Labour and the Conservatives.

They took over in Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire – electing 29 additional councillors in Shropshire alone – and are now the largest party in Devon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. All are areas where new Liberal Democrat MPs were elected in 2024.

The Greens more than doubled their number of councillors, but their gains were spread wide. They are, however, now well placed to help the Liberal Democrats govern in Devon and Gloucestershire, if they choose.

One other interesting by-product of the impact of Reform was a reduction in support for Independent and community candidates in some areas.

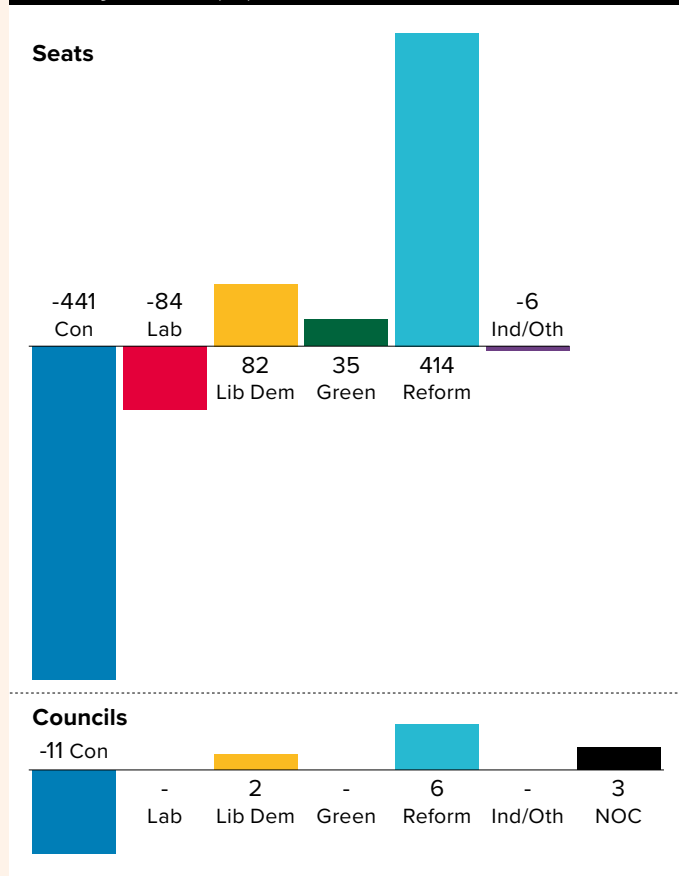
In Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, for example, the local Independent group won a single division compared with all 10 in 2021; in Durham, non-party representation halved to 13 councillors.



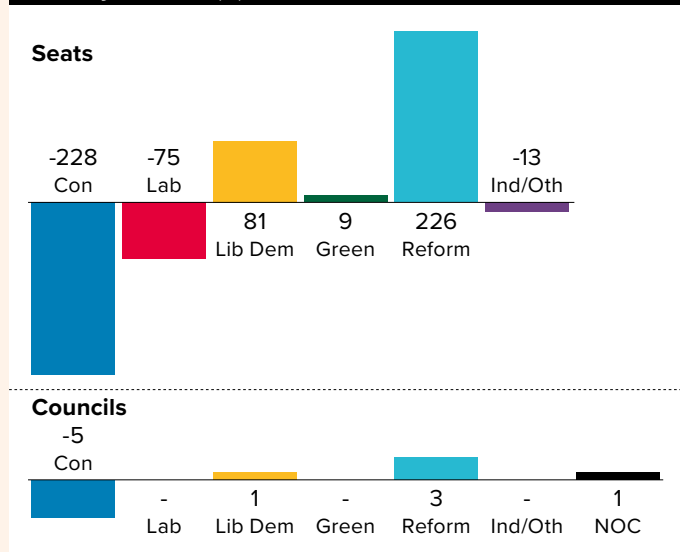
Summary of council results for England 2025*

*compared with seats/councils won in 2021, taking boundary changes into account

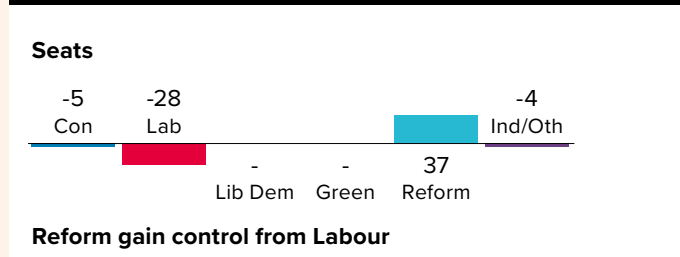
County councils (14)



Unitary councils (8)

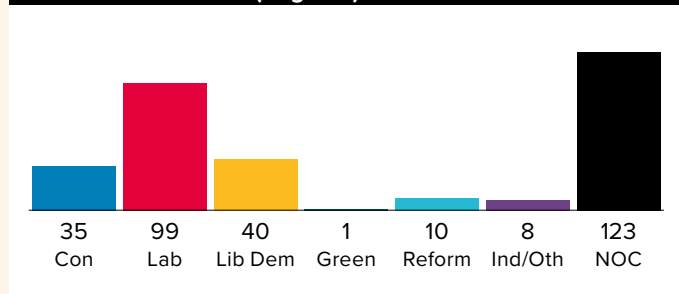


Doncaster

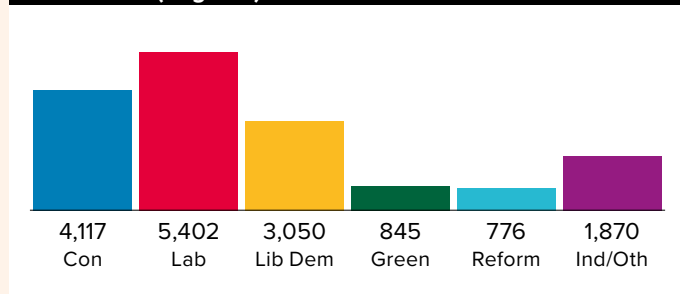


Reform gain control from Labour

Councils controlled (England) 2025



Councillors (England) 2025



All this of course brings next year's local contests into sharper focus. Many will take place in what look to be Reform 'deserts'. It is hard to see the party making much headway in London or in big conurbations such as Liverpool and Manchester.

On the other hand, the seven counties where elections were postponed this year are likely to go the polls and under current

circumstances Reform will expect to repeat its success in parts of East Anglia (the base for three of its five MPs elected in 2024) and on the south coast.

In addition, several potentially Reform-friendly councils will have all-out elections after boundary changes, thereby enhancing the scope for a big turnover in seats.

Among the metropolitan boroughs,

Barnsley, Sandwell, South Tyneside and Walsall have shown support for euro-sceptic parties in the past.

Unitary councils with all-out elections in 2026 include North East Lincolnshire (which voted 45 per cent Reform in the mayoral contest) and Thurrock in Essex, where UKIP came within 1,000 votes of grabbing the parliamentary seat in 2015. ●



Conference and Exhibition

#LGAConf25 | 1-3 JULY | LIVERPOOL

**Confirmed
speakers**

Kevin Hollinrake MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Rushanara Ali MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister for Homelessness and Democracy

Vikki Slade MP

Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Steve Rotheram

Mayor, Liverpool City Region

Professor Iain Buchan

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Innovation, University of Liverpool

Jo Bibby

Director of the Healthy Lives Programme, The Health Foundation

Graeme McDonald

Chief Executive, Solace

Jess McGregor

President ADASS, and Executive Director of Adults and Health, London Borough of Camden

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CCLA

GOOD INVESTMENT