

# Councillors' Forum

## Agenda

Thursday, 21 January 2016  
12.30 pm

Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local  
Government House, Smith Square, London,  
SW1P 3HZ

**To:** Members of the Councillors' Forum  
**cc:** Named officers for briefing purposes

## **Guidance notes for visitors**

**Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ**

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**Please don't forget to sign out at reception and return your badge when you depart.**

Councillors' Forum  
21 January 2016

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There will be a meeting of the Councillors' Forum at **12.30 pm on Thursday, 21 January 2016**  
Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ.

A sandwich lunch will be available at 1.15pm.

**Attendance Sheet:**

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

**Political Group meetings:**

The group meetings will take place in advance of the meeting. Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

**Apologies:**

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

<b>Conservative:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3223	email: <a href="mailto:lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk">lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Labour:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3334	email: <a href="mailto:Labour.GroupLGA@local.gov.uk">Labour.GroupLGA@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Independent:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: <a href="mailto:independent.group@local.gov.uk">independent.group@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Liberal Democrat:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: <a href="mailto:libdem@local.gov.uk">libdem@local.gov.uk</a>

**Location:**

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

**LGA Contact:**

John Wilesmith  
[john.wilesmith@local.gov.uk](mailto:john.wilesmith@local.gov.uk) 0207 6643363

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## Councillors' Forum – Membership 2015/2016

Councillor	Authority
<b>Conservative ( 39)</b>	
Lord Gary Porter (Chairman)	South Holland District Council
Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
Cllr John Beesley	Bournemouth Borough Council
Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE	Bexley Council
Cllr Simon Cooke	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr James Jamieson	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Claire-Louise Leyland	Camden Council
Cllr Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cllr Paul Diviani	East Devon District Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr David Simmonds CBE	Hillingdon London Borough Council
Cllr Robert Light	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
Cllr Neil Clarke MBE	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey County Council
Cllr David Hodge	Surrey County Council
Cllr Melvyn Caplan	Westminster City Council
Cllr Jonathan Owen	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Cllr Colin Noble	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Philippa Roe	Westminster City Council
Cllr Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr David Burbage MBE	Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Tony Jackson	East Herts Council
Cllr Sean Anstee	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Morris Bright	Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
Cllr Nigel Ashton	North Somerset Council
Cllr Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Peter Golds	Tower Hamlets Council
Cllr Kevin Bentley	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Ivan Ould	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Liz Hackett Pain	Monmouthshire County Council
Cllr Roy Perry	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Blake Pain	Harborough District Council
Cllr John Fuller	South Norfolk District Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
<b>Labour ( 40)</b>	
Cllr Tudor Evans OBE	Plymouth City Council
Cllr Sarah Hayward	Camden Council
Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council

Cllr Phil Davies	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
Cllr David Acton	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE (Vice-Chair)	Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr Bryony Rudkin	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Judi Billing MBE	North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	High Peak Borough Council
Cllr Graham Chapman	Nottingham City Council
Mayor Sir Steve Bullock (Vice-Chair)	Lewisham London Borough Council
Mayor Jules Pipe	Hackney London Borough Council
Cllr Paul Watson	Sunderland City Council
Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
Cllr Ian Swithenbank CBE	Northumberland Council
Cllr Nick Forbes	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Cllr Linda Thomas	Bolton Council
Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
Cllr Sue Woodward	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Keith Wakefield OBE	Leeds City Council
Cllr Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Cllr Lib Peck	Lambeth London Borough Council
Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
Cllr Amy Cross	Blackpool Council
Cllr Helen Holland	Bristol City Council
Cllr Anne Western	Derbyshire County Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
Cllr Aaron Shotton	Flintshire County Council
Cllr Tony Page	Reading Borough Council
Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
Cllr Alice Perry	Islington Council
Cllr Timothy Swift	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr David Wilcox OBE	Derbyshire County Council
Cllr Richard Watts	Islington Council
Cllr Claire Kober OBE	Haringey Council
Vacancy	Labour
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Lord Peter Smith	Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Iain Malcolm	South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Samantha Dixon	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cllr Andy Moorhead	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Judith Blake	Leeds City Council
Cllr Nicholas Crofts	Liverpool City Council
Cllr Clyde Loakes	Waltham Forest London Borough Council
<b>Independent ( 10)</b>	
Cllr Marianne Overton MBE (Vice Chairman)	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Chris Townsend	Mole Valley District Council
Cllr Bob Dutton OBE	Wrexham County Borough Council

Cllr Mike Eathorne-Gibbons	Cornwall Council
Alderman Sir David Wootton	City of London Corporation
Cllr Peter Reeve	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Alan Seldon	Herefordshire Council
Vacancy	Independent Group
Cllr Daniella Radice	Bristol City Council
Cllr Robert Bucke	Tendring District Council
<b>Liberal Democrat ( 9 )</b>	
Cllr Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council
Cllr Lisa Brett	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Richard Kemp CBE	Liverpool City Council
Cllr Claire Hudson	Mendip District Council
Cllr Howard Sykes MBE	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
Cllr Mike Bell	North Somerset Council
Mayor Dave Hodgson	Bedford Borough Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Ross Henley	Taunton Deane Borough Council
Councilman Edward Lord OBE JP	City of London Corporation
Cllr David Neighbour	Hart District Council
Cllr Chris White	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Alan Connett	Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Ruth Dombey	Sutton London Borough Council
Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE	Watford Borough Council

## Agenda

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### Councillors' Forum

Thursday 21 January 2016

12.30 pm

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**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday, 3 March 2016, 12.30 pm, Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ





## **Spending Review and the Local Government Finance Settlement**

### **Purpose**

As background to the discussion.

### **Summary**

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark, has set out the financial offer to local government over the Spending Review period through the provisional local government finance settlement. This session provides an opportunity for councillors to raise questions or issues for the Secretary of State to consider prior to the publication of the final settlement in February 2016. A biography of the Secretary of State is attached at **Appendix A**.

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to note the presentation and raise issues from a local government perspective.

### **Action**

Officers will take forward actions identified.

### **Contact officer:**

Nicola Morton

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## **Spending Review and the Local Government Finance Settlement**

### **Background**

1. On 25 November 2015, the Chancellor presented his Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 which set the overall path of public spending, including local government, for the next four financial years. The results were not as adverse to local government as widely expected and we take this as a sign that the Government listened to the concerns of the sector.
2. Overall, the reduction to core government funding (comprising revenue support grant, business rates and additional funding through the Better Care Fund) is estimated to be 24 per cent in real terms. Once the projections for council tax (including the social care precept) and other sources of locally financed income or unavoidable costs are taken into account, 'local government spending' as defined by the Treasury in the Spending Review document is reduced by 6.7 per cent in real terms over the Spending Review period.
3. On 17 December, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government presented the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17 and an Offer to Councils for Future Years which showed how the decisions made as part of the Spending Review impact on allocations of grants to individual local authorities.
4. The pattern of funding reductions is different from previous years due to the Government taking potential income from council tax into account. Settlements in future years are likely to reinforce this pattern, with the proposed distribution of the new Better Care Fund and a scaling back of the new homes bonus changing the funding landscape for individual councils.
5. Through the announcements in the Spending Review and the Settlement, the Government is starting the process of engagement on how, by 2020, English local government will collectively retain 100 per cent of business rate income. This will be accompanied by reductions to government grants and transfers of new responsibilities to make the overall reform cost neutral to the Exchequer at the time of implementation.

### **The LGA's Work**

6. On the day of the Spending review and the day of the local government finance settlement, we provided on-the-day briefings for members. They are appended to this report. Following the Spending Review, we also ran a media briefing session which resulted in significant follow-up coverage. At the time of the forum, we will have provided an official response to the settlement consultation in line with the timescales set by the Government, with a copy available on [the LGA website](#). We will respond to the proposed changes to the New Homes Bonus in due course.
7. Through various working groups, we continue to engage with the Government on the arrangements for and detailed implications of the announcement to move to full collective retention of business rates income in England including discussions about which additional responsibilities should be transferred to local government. This is a very complex reform the implementation of which needs to be considered carefully to avoid unintended adverse consequences to councils, especially those currently relying on top-ups from other local authorities.

## **Appendix A**

### **The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP**

#### **Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**



The Rt Hon Greg Clark was appointed Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 11 May 2015. Prior to this, he had held a number of ministerial positions: he was appointed as a Minister of State at Communities and Local Government, with responsibilities for decentralisation and planning policy in May 2010; as the Minister for Cities in July 2011; as Financial Secretary to the Treasury in September 2012; as the Minister for Cities and Constitution in the Cabinet Office in October 2013 and as the Minister for Universities and Science in July 2014.

Greg was first elected as the Conservative MP for Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2005. He was quickly appointed as the Shadow Minister for Charities, Social Enterprises and Volunteering, before moving to the role of Shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change in October 2008.

Before becoming an MP, Greg was the BBC's Controller of Commercial Policy and then the Director of Policy for the Conservative Party from March 2001 for three successive leaders - William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard. He also served as a councillor and Cabinet Member on Westminster City Council from 2002 until his election to Parliament.

Greg was born in Middlesbrough in 1967, and attended the local St Peter's Comprehensive, South Bank. He went on to study Economics at Cambridge University and was awarded his PhD at the London School of Economics. Thereafter, Greg worked for the Boston Consulting Group and was posted to the USA, Mexico, South America and Iceland, as well as working for clients in the UK.

Speaking recently at the LGA's 2015 Annual Conference, Greg urged councils to be the masters of their own destiny, saying:

"I want every place in the country to consider how they can assert their strengths and make their mark.

"We must be a nation of muscular communities – north and south, town and country."



21 January 2016

## **Chairman's Update**

This report covers the Chairman's activities in the period since the last Councillors' Forum 22/10/15 – 21/01/16

### **Local Government Association (LGA) business**

- Rt Hon Greg Clark MP - Department for Communities and Local Government (LGA Group Leaders meeting) x 2 meetings
- Independent Group annual conference
- Lord Kerslake – LGA President
- LGA annual finance conference
- LGA's Parliamentary Housing Briefing
- South West Councils meeting
- County Councils Network conference
- Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands Member Induction Day
- Councillor John Warmisham - UK Delegation, Congress of the Council of Europe
- Tony Lloyd - Interim Mayor, Greater Manchester

### **Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

- Community Covenant Conference, Ministry of Defence
- Lord Freud – Department for Work and Pensions
- Rt Hon Greg Hands MP – HM Treasury
- Devolution APPG inquiry session
- Rt Hon Greg Clark MP - Department for Communities and Local Government x 3 meetings
- 10 Downing Street Custom and Self Build Summit
- Lords Constitution Committee's inquiry on devolution
- Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- David Godfrey - Secretary of State's Extended Ministerial Office, Department for Communities and Local Government
- Heidi Alexander MP - Shadow Secretary of State for Health
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Stakeholder Reception
- Lord Freud – Department for Work and Pensions

### **Meetings with organisations and individuals**

- Commonwealth Local Government Forums 's European member meeting
- Stephen Dorrell - NHS Confederation
- Policy Exchange London Housing Roundtable
- Jonathan Isaby - TaxPayers' Alliance
- Federation of Master Builders reception
- LGiU Winter reception
- Policy Exchange London Housing Roundtable
- De Montfort University Councillor Commission launch
- Patricia Blatherwick - Maximus UK



**Councillors' Forum**

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- Richard James - YMCA London South West; Jason Stacey - YMCA England
- Henry Ashworth - Portman Group
- Sir Merrick Cockell - UK Municipal Bonds Agency

## **Children and Young People Board – report from Cllr Roy Perry (Chair)**

### **Home Office CSE Panel**

1. On 8 December, I represented the LGA at an expert panel meeting on child sexual exploitation, chaired by the Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation, Karen Bradley MP. A range of statutory and non-statutory agencies were in attendance, and the theme of the discussion was “how can national policy be made to work with, and not against, local action in tackling child sexual exploitation?” As part of a wide ranging discussion, I spoke on the importance of all government departments working together in a co-ordinated way, highlighted the significant pressures on local agencies caused by rapidly rising demand at a time of reduced budgets across the public sector, and underlined the need to ensure that Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) are properly able to hold the system to account. I also highlighted the work of the LGA to support national work to tackle CSE at a local level, and reminded the Minister of local government’s ongoing commitment to this issue.

### **Meeting with the Secretary of State for Education**

2. I accompanied the Chairman of the LGA, Lord Porter of Spalding, to a meeting with the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, on 18 November. Our conversation covered a wide range of topics, and we were glad to hear that central government shares a number of our concerns on key issues such as the pressures facing local government funding of children’s services, the impact of Ofsted on children’s services and the planning of further education provision for 16 to 19 year olds. The Secretary of State suggested that the Minister of State for Children and Families, Edward Timpson MP, might attend one of our future Board meetings to continue these discussions in more detail.

### **Profile in Schools Week Magazine**

3. On 8 December, [Schools Week Magazine published my profile](#) as the new Chairman of the LGA Children and Young People Board. The profile touched upon several policy areas, including the work of Ofsted (*‘While [Cllr Perry] sees a role for inspection, he adds that Ofsted inspections of local authorities in particular are “causing serious problems for children’s services”*) and free schools (*‘Responding to the government’s big push for 500 new free schools by 2020, [Cllr Perry] told Schools Week last month that free schools should only go ahead in areas in need of places – and that councils have the local knowledge to identify the most suitable locations’*). The piece also drew attention to [the Children and Young People Board’s response to the Spending Review](#), in which we: *‘called for “urgent clarification” on how the £600 million cuts in the Education Services Grant (ESG) — used by schools to fund a host of provision including safeguarding and criminal records checks and ensuring students are at school — would be achieved, “and how quickly, without impacting on welfare and standards”.*

### **Annual Conference of Association of Independent LSCB Chairs**

4. Cllr Ivan Ould represented the Board at the Annual Conference of the Association of Independent LSCB Chairs on 9 November. He joined a panel in the opening session of the conference, which included, among others, the President of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), Alison O’Sullivan; the Chief Executive of Children England, Cathy Evans; and the Chair of the NHS Confederation, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Dorrell. The

panel discussed recent developments in safeguarding, with a particular focus on partnership working when there is reduced capacity but increased need for joint working. A key theme of the discussion was the potential value of agreeing a process between key stakeholders for defining a national framework for monitoring the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements.

### **Youth Employment Convention**

5. Cllr Antoinette Bramble represented the Board at the Youth Employment Convention on the 24 November. She spoke at a break out session on 'Skills We Need', which focussed on jobs and productivity and the youth offer. Cllr Bramble highlighted research published as part of the LGA's DevoNext campaign, which shows that devolution has the potential to reduce youth employment by 20 percent. She also emphasised the benefits of greater local government involvement in skills programmes.

### **Healthy beginnings: Giving our children the best start in life**

6. Together with the Community Wellbeing Portfolio, [we published a document](#) in which a number of leading practitioners outline the major implications of the transfer of responsibility for delivering public health services for children aged 5 years and under from NHS England to local government.

### **Leadership Essentials: Children's Services**

7. We held a 'Leadership Essentials' event for children's services from 7 – 8 November. The event provided portfolio holders, service committee chairs and interested council leaders a chance to develop leadership skills specific to the area of children's services and share their experiences among colleagues dealing with similar challenges.

### **Meetings with the NCB and YMCA**

8. On 3 December, I met with the Director of the National Children's Bureau (NCB), Enver Solomon, to discuss ways in which our organisations might work together, particularly in the areas of education and children's social care. On the same day, I met with the Senior Parliamentary and Policy Officer at the YMCA, Liam Preston, who highlighted two projects that might be of interest to the LGA: one focussing on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support in schools, and another on 'help to rent'. I offered to share any good practice in our Children and Young People Bulletin.

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## **City Regions Board – report from Sir Richard Leese (Chair)**

### **Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill**

1. Members of the City Regions Board in partnership with the People and Places Board have continued to lead the LGA's lobbying on the Cities and Local Government Bill (the Bill) as it continues through Parliament to ensure that the Bill facilitates the most flexible, locally-led negotiations. Royal Assent was expected in December, but will now be early 2016.
2. Recently, the Government tabled a number of amendments regarding "consents" to Combined Authorities. Government also tabled a new amendment giving the Secretary of State the power to take back health functions, after they have been devolved, without local consent. These Government amendments have triggered a great deal of concern in the sector and the LGA has been briefing MPs<sup>1</sup> based on steer from both Boards. Officers have also produced a briefing on the implications of the new amendments to the Bill for member authorities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Devolution: constitutional considerations**

3. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the UK has convened a groups of experts to consider the wider constitutional and long-term issues resulting from devolution in all four nations. This inquiry is being led by the LGA President, Lord Kerslake, who attended the City Regions Board in December to update Members and listen to their views. Members will be seeking to initiate a debate on any English issues arising from the report following its publication in March 2016. The LGA is providing the secretariat for the Group.

### **Devolution: governance arrangements**

4. The City Regions Board will be focussing on models of executive governance and will be producing a descriptive piece of work on this topic.

### **Devolution: the LGA Support offer**

5. Take up of the LGA's devolution support offer, drawn up with direction from the City Regions and People and Places Boards, has been very good, and officers have received positive feedback from councils on the range of services that have been used. Andrew Campbell, Associate Director, has met with groups of councils in every part of the country and his connections have been particularly valuable in helping local areas gain insight into the thinking of Whitehall departments as they prepare for their challenge sessions with Ministers.
6. The [DevoNext hub](#) continues to receive positive feedback from the sector and officers have added a number of new features in the past few weeks, including:
  - 6.1. A short video to explain what combined authorities are.
  - 6.2. Links to the September proposals and summaries of the devolution deals that have been announced.
  - 6.3. Links to useful resources developed by local authorities.
  - 6.4. Links to research and analysis to bolster the evidence base for bids.
  - 6.5. Infographics illustrating the benefits of devolution for businesses and what could be gained by devolving skills and employment support.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7318899/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal_content/56/10180/7318899/ARTICLE)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7611125/ARTICLE#sthash.SsgilYOO.dpuf](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal_content/56/10180/7611125/ARTICLE#sthash.SsgilYOO.dpuf)

7. The LGA has also organised several well-attended events on devolution including:
  - 7.1. A national conference on communicating about devolution in Birmingham on 21 October.
  - 7.2. A joint national conference with SOLACE on governance in a new world on 27 November.
  - 7.3. Two events for elected members to explore place-based leadership in the context of devolution as part of the LGA's Leading Edge and Leaders' Programme.
  - 7.4. The first meeting of a new network the LGA has established to support council officers working on devolution.
8. As most places move to an implementation phase, officers will receive steer from members on how best to focus current resources on implementation and sharing emerging practice.

#### **City Regions meeting with Greg Clark**

9. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wished to discuss implications of the Spending Review and met with Members in December. Members made detailed representation of the following issues:
  - 9.1. Distribution and equalisation measures.
  - 9.2. The nature, form and timescale for the Better Care Fund and its interconnection with the New Homes Bonus.
  - 9.3. Future Business Rates retention and management of risks including impact of appeals and use of reserves and assets.
  - 9.4. Implications of council tax announcements and the Government's position.

#### **The evidence base for devolving employment, skills and welfare**

10. The City Regions and People and Places Boards commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Inclusion) to develop a devolved employment model for the most disadvantaged jobseekers, including Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) work-ready claimants, which could be flexible enough to apply in all areas across England. The proposal was submitted to Ministers at the beginning of November by the relevant Board leads (Cllr Sir Richard Leese CBE, Cllr Hawthorne MBE and Cllr Izzi Seccombe), with the aim of influencing Spending Review decisions.
11. The Spending Review announced a new specialist Work and Health Programme (WHP), to replace Work Programme and Work Choice contracts in 2017, for claimants with health conditions or disabilities and those unemployed for over two years. This announcement reflects many principles set out in the LGA proposal (but officers understand it will be a much smaller programme with low levels of funding). Given that so many decisions are yet to be taken, the LGA is at the forefront of discussions with DWP to influence these. In response to a letter from the Employment Minister, Priti Patel, officers are seeking a ministerial meeting for Sir Richard Leese and Cllr Hawthorne to take forward LGA ideas. A roundtable session with councils and the Department for Work and Pensions will take place at the end of January.

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## **Community Wellbeing Portfolio – from Cllr Izzi Seccombe (Chair)**

### **Spending Review**

1. The Spending Review has obviously dominated the last month. I was interviewed by Radio 4's Today Programme on 26 November to discuss the council tax precept for social care. And later that morning I spoke at an Age UK and International Longevity Centre UK panel debate on the implications of the Spending Review for older people and adult social care.

### **Meeting with Secretary of State for Community and Social Care**

2. On 2 December I met with the Minister for Community and Social Care, Alistair Burt MP. This was a helpful opportunity to discuss the Spending Review soon after its publication.

### **EU Covenant on Demographic Change**

3. On 7 December 2015 I spoke in Brussels at the launch of the EU Covenant on Demographic Change regarding the LGA work on ageing and its publication "Ageing: the silver lining". The Covenant on Demographic Change aims to gather all local, regional and national authorities, and other stakeholders, that commit to cooperate and implement evidence-based solutions to support active and healthy ageing as a comprehensive answer to Europe's demographic challenge.

### **Syrian Refugees**

4. The Minister for resettlement thanked local Government for welcoming 1000 Syrian refugees before Christmas, and his statement can be found [here](#). LGA members and officers are working with government and other partners on the next stage of the scheme, including funding arrangements for both authorities and regions. We are also supporting a number of events to explore next steps at a regional level and regional contacts and more information are on the LGA webpage at [www.local.gov.uk/refugees](http://www.local.gov.uk/refugees)

### **APPGs on Housing and Care for Older People and Ageing**

5. On 30 November 2015 Cllr Gillian Ford, lead member for the Community Wellbeing Portfolio, spoke at an APPG on Housing and Care for Older People and on 7 December Cllr Rachel Eden, member of the Community Wellbeing Portfolio, spoke at an APPG on Ageing.

### **First Magazine Articles**

6. In December 2015 First Magazine published an article on Children's Mental Health, fronted by Cllr Gillian Ford, lead member for the Community Wellbeing Forum. In January 2016 First Magazine published an article on the armed forces community covenant.

### **Response to Care Sector Letter**

7. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Care, NHS Confederation, Care Provider Alliance and the Care and Support Alliance wrote to George Osborne, Jeremy Hunt and Greg Clarke in December calling for urgent talks with the Treasury and other Whitehall Departments on the crisis in adult social care in the care of older and disabled people. In my response I highlighted that the Government had listened to our concerns about the urgent need to address our social care funding crisis by allowing councils with adult social care responsibilities to raise extra money through council tax to offset some of the pressures on social care. I also welcomed the additional funding for social care in the Better Care Fund, rising to £1.5 billion by 2019/20, announced in the Spending Review. However, whilst this will go part of the way to helping the social care funding gap, there is concern that there is no new Better Care Fund money next year, with very little money the following year, meaning that the full benefit will not be seen until the end of the decade, despite care for the elderly and vulnerable being at breaking point. Councils, the NHS, care providers and the voluntary sector are united in calling for full funding for adult social care as this is vital to protecting care services and easing pressure on the NHS. If social care remains inadequately funded, the support which helps to keep people out of hospital and in their own homes will suffer, which will increase the pressure on the NHS.

### **Community Wellbeing Portfolio**

8. As members will be aware, the Portfolio's priorities for the forthcoming year have been split into four Policy Groups: the future vision for health and care systems; the funding and support for adult social care; the role of councils in promoting health and wellbeing; and vulnerable people and older people. Each of the groups is led by one of the lead members of the Portfolio, and each has recently met to discuss their particular areas of focus and how they will continue to deliver the Portfolio's work programme.

### **Joint Meeting between Community Wellbeing and NHS Clinical Commissioners**

9. Following two meetings in 2015, lead members of the Portfolio will attend a further joint meeting with NHS Clinical Commissioners Board Members on 28 January. The previous meetings have been very productive as a way to continue to improve Health and Wellbeing Boards, and it is anticipated that lead members will continue to attend regular joint meetings with colleagues at NHS CC in the future.

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## **Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – report from Cllr Ian Stephens (Chair)**

### **Spending Review**

1. It was encouraging that the Government recognised the important economic and social benefits of our nation's cultural and heritage offer in the Spending Review. The LGA has long argued that culture and heritage boosts growth, attracts visitors and can help to reduce and prevent costly health and social care expenditure. The welcome settlement for national arts, tourism, sport, archives and heritage funding will help to relieve some of the pressure on councils, although the 24 per cent cut to local government funding will of course impact on valued frontline services. I will be discussing with Ministers and partners how we can work together to keep supporting local culture, tourism, sport and heritage and take advantage of opportunities from the devolution agenda.
2. The visitor economy is one of this country's strongest performing economic sectors and we look forward to working with the Government to understand how the new £40 million Discover England Fund will build upon locally-led activity to increase tourism. I have also written to the Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to express concern at the proposed closer working between VisitEngland and VisitBritain. This risks diminishing the voice of the English regions in decisions about tourism investment and goes against the devolutionary direction of travel.

### **Sport and Physical Activity**

3. The Government has published its new sports strategy and I was delighted that many of the LGA's recommendations have been taken on board. The strategy provides a good framework to further our call to Sport England to rebalance funding away from national interventions through to councils which already have the facilities, partnerships and expertise in place to best reach the most people, of all ages and abilities.
4. The extension of Sport England's remit to focus on children aged 5 and upwards is in line with councils' new public health responsibilities for this age group and offers great opportunities for joined-up work on tackling inactivity and driving up participation. Our calls for the Premier League to contribute more of its huge profits towards football grassroots have also been acknowledged by the Government and we look forward to seeing this directly benefit the country's sports pitches and facilities, the majority of which are still owned by councils.
5. I was pleased to speak at the latest of our very popular Sport Leadership Essentials Programme 21-22 October, in partnership with Sport England. The event supported 15 portfolio holders and sessions included different delivery models for leisure services, closer working with health, improving local commissioning relationships and partnerships with National Governing Bodies to increase participation.
6. With Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chair of the People and Places Board, I met Jesse Norman MP, Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, on 7 December to discuss sport and broadband. I highlighted the CTS Board's campaign for the Premier League to re-invest a greater proportion of its profits into the grassroots game and the LGA's view that

national sports funding should be re-balanced through Sport England towards councils and local partners. I also spoke about local government's ambition to use devolutionary powers and funding to procure new solutions to achieving better broadband and mobile connectivity coverage, in particular the Three Southern Counties. We will keep in touch with the Committee on their work programme and ensure that the LGA contributes to relevant inquiries.

### **Libraries and Culture**

7. I have written to Ed Vaizey MP, Culture Minister, and Tracey Crouch MP, Sport and Tourism Minister, about the forthcoming Culture White Paper. I emphasised that much of this country's cultural offer is funded and supported locally and that continued budget pressures mean it is vital central and local government work together to ensure the total public subsidy for culture is spent efficiently and in accordance with local need. I also highlighted opportunities for culture from devolution, how culture can add value to other priorities and the LGA's and Arts Council England's partnership to support effective local political leadership.
8. The LGA/Department for Culture, Media and Sport Leadership for Libraries Taskforce has published its first 6-month report on progress against the priorities agreed by LGA Members and Ministers. In particular, the Taskforce secured £2.6 million funding to rollout free WiFi to over 98% of public libraries by end of March 2016. 68 councils will benefit from the funding and I wrote about how libraries are using digital to enhance their offer in the December edition of [first](#).
9. I was pleased to speak at the Leadership Essentials Culture programmes on 3-4 November and 2-3 December. These events, organised in partnership with Arts Council England, supported 25 portfolio holders and sessions included different delivery models for library services and how cultural services can be commissioned to deliver wider council priorities.

### **Archives and Archaeology**

10. I met Jeff James, Chief Executive of The National Archives, on 3 December to discuss key issues for local archive services. This included the importance of sharing innovative practice, moving to the 20-year rule and plans to mark this year's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's death.
11. I met Quinton Carroll, Chair of the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGO) in England, on 24 November. We talked about the important role of archaeology in preserving what makes places special, the capacity issues facing the sector, different delivery models for archive services and opportunities presented by devolution.

### **Culture Tourism and Sport Board 1 December**

12. Viscountess Penelope Cobham, Chairman of Visit England, and Mike Diaper, Executive Director of Sport England, updated the Board on their organisation's respective priorities.



**Councillors' Forum**

21 January 2016

LGA members reinforced the important role councils play boosting growth through tourism and increasing sport and physical activity participation.

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## **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – report from Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair)**

### **Flooding**

1. I wrote jointly with Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the Safer and Strong Communities Board to DCLG Ministers Brandon Lewis MP and Marcus Jones MP to update them on the LGA's ongoing work to promote and support council activity in preparing and responding to civil emergencies, particularly following flooding in the north of England in December 2015. We also brought to their attention that councils will need continued support from the government given the extensive damage, particularly to roads and bridges, which will take some time to assess.

### **Planning**

2. The LGA responded to a call for evidence on by local plans by the Local Plans Expert Group. This stressed that the focus needs to be on allowing the system to bed in effectively, avoiding large-scale reform which de-rails the good work councils are doing to get up to date plans in place. We highlighted a number of key areas where we feel there is scope to make changes to the current plan-making process in order to make it less costly, faster and provide more clarity for councils, communities and the development industry.
3. Research commissioned by the Board showing more than 475,000 new homes in England and Wales have planning permission but have yet to be built was reported widely. Cllr Ed Turner gave interviews on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme, BBC Radio 5 Live and BBC News and the story was reported across BBC Radio 2, 3, 4 and 5 Live news bulletins. The Telegraph, Financial Times, Guardian, BBC Online, Metro and Mail Online also covered the story.

### **Bus provision**

4. The Chair of the EEHT Board met the Transport Minister, Andrew Jones MP, to discuss a couple of practical issues raised in the LGA's report on bus provision, Missing the Bus?, namely on securing a better legislative means of bus franchising and the importance of activating Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act (TMA) which councils feel will help tackle congestion hot spots and therefore improve bus punctuality. And, at the request of the Minister I followed up with a letter to provide further details and options as to how traffic enforcement powers under Part 6 of the TMA could be enacted in a way that would address ministerial concerns of potential misuse by some councils.

### **Zero-cost measures to support cycling and walking**

5. In recognition of councils' ambition for promoting cycling and walking the Chair of the EEHT Board wrote to the Transport Minister, Andrew Jones MP, to propose a number of measures that would be of zero-cost to the Government, that would help local areas with active travel strategies. This included: civil enforcement of moving traffic offences, stable and long-term funding, and Government support for further roll out of workplace parking levy schemes.

## **Air Quality**

6. The LGA responded to the Government's draft plans on 'Tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities' which sets out the UK's approach to meeting the NO<sub>2</sub> limit values set out in the Ambient Air Quality Directive (EU targets) in the shortest possible time. Evidence was also submitted to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee enquiry on Defra's role for reducing emissions of key pollutants and whether the correct incentives are in place to support consumers and businesses in reducing transport emissions. In summary, it was felt that Defra's role was too focused on reporting and monitoring rather than on supporting action for improvement and that Government could do more to encourage switching to lower emission vehicles and alternative modes of travel.

## **Housing Commission**

7. The LGA Housing Commission had its initial meeting between Lead Members and the Advisory Panel on 2 December 2015. At the meeting Lead Members and the Advisory Panel agreed areas of focus for the Housing Commission, and the outputs it will seek to deliver in the lead up to the final report being launched at LGA Annual Conference 2016. The Commission has launched a call for evidence which invites councils, partners, organisations and individuals to contribute their issues, evidence, and examples of effective housing and ideas to the Commission's Advisory Panel, made up of LGA Board members, experts and academics. We welcome all contributions before the 26 February 2016. Submissions of no more than 3,000 words should be sent to [LGAhousingcommission@local.gov.uk](mailto:LGAhousingcommission@local.gov.uk).

## **21<sup>st</sup> United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21)**

8. Around a thousand mayors and local leaders came together in Paris in December to bring the voices of local and regional governments to the 21st United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21) and showcase local and regional governments' activities and best practices in climate-oriented decentralised cooperation. In addition to the official Local and Regional Leaders Delegation to COP21, the gathering saw the Climate Summit for Local Leaders alongside sessions on how to cooperate to tackle climate change, the role of local governments in tackling climate change, and women's leadership and development, among others.
9. UK councillors attending included Cllr Richard Kemp CBE (Liverpool City Council) as the UK representative on the World Council and Executive of United Cities & Local Government (UCLG) and Cllr Sian Reid (Cambridge) who is the spokesperson on climate change for CEMR, the 'European LGA'. The Climate Summit for Local Leaders culminated with the 'Paris City Hall Declaration' where local and regional governments expressed their commitment to continue working in mitigation and adaptation and requested world leaders to reach a far reaching agreement. See more at: <http://climatesummitlocalleaders.paris/>

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## **Improvement and Innovation Board – report from Cllr David Simmonds CBE (Chairman)**

### **Improvement**

1. Over the course of November and December 2015, I visited and met representatives from a number of councils to discuss their improvement plans, including Birmingham City Council, Somerset County Council, Northamptonshire County Council, and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. I used these conversations to share best practice on a range of issues and highlight the different elements of the LGA's sector-led improvement offer that might be particularly helpful for each council going forward.
2. On 10 November 2015, I participated in a panel discussion at LG Communications' Public Sector Communications Academy 2015. The Academy looks to bring central and local government together to develop new communications skills, embrace disruptive technology and change the culture of public service professionals. The session that I took part in focussed on the challenges facing the sector and the role professional communications can play in meeting them.
3. I briefed the press on a range of improvement-related issues over the course of November and December 2015, as well as taking a leading role in presenting the LGA's response to the Local Government Finance Settlement in the days following 17 December.
4. Our sector-led improvement offer remains popular with councils. In 2015/16, up to and including the second quarter, the LGA has worked with: 38 councils on change of control/leader support, 27 councils on bespoke mentoring support, 16 councils on top team development work, 17 councils with follow up work to peer challenges, 101 councils on direct improvement support and 36 councils on communications improvement support. In the same timeframe, 100 peer challenges had been delivered, confirmed, or were in discussion, including corporate, finance, fire, children and adults challenge. There were also three corporate peer challenge follow up visits and we delivered eight peer development/briefing events, with both further visits and briefings planned.
5. On 19 November 2015, we published our [Making Safeguarding Personal: 2014-15 evaluation report](#). This evaluation aims to find out the impact of using a Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) approach on: outcomes for people using safeguarding services; ways of working and professional culture in safeguarding; partnership working and culture change. It also looks at what further support would be needed to ensure consistent implementation and makes some recommendations for future work.

### **Innovation**

6. We worked with a number of sector representative bodies to produce, in December 2015, [a set of papers](#) that outline the sector's position and priorities for digital including: improving online transactional services; transforming local public services; developing the necessary leadership skills to understand and apply digital approaches; coordinating programme leadership and support. Taken together the four papers set out a high-level case for investing in a coordinated and comprehensive programme of support. This will enable local government to maximise the customer benefits and cost savings that can be generated from exploiting the potential of modern digital tools, technologies and approaches in local public services.

## Transparency

7. We published two reports for those authorities subscribing through LG Inform. The first, [available here](#), pulls together data from the Local Government Workforce and Earnings surveys and presents it at local authority level. It displays information on sickness absence, labour turnover, vacancy rate, the demographics of the highest earners, annual pay, age profile and ethnic origin. The second, [available here](#), provides housing related data at ward level or below, including density, tenure, dwelling type, over/under occupation and energy consumption, helping build a picture of a local authority's housing related pressures, which with further local information helps identify local issues, priorities and areas for further investigation.
8. At the end of November 2015, we launched the latest iteration of the popular 'Spidergram' analysis to show councils how they compare with others on a range of financial indicators. For the first time, the data and format were released on LG Inform (copy and paste this link to your web browser to access this directly [http://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/financial-diagnostic-report-1?mod-area=E10000009&mod-group=AllCountiesInCountry\\_England&modify-report=Apply](http://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/financial-diagnostic-report-1?mod-area=E10000009&mod-group=AllCountiesInCountry_England&modify-report=Apply)), which will enable member councils to construct their own comparator groups. Due to the sensitive nature of the Spidergrams, they are only currently available to registered users, ie councils.

## Leadership

9. I led two Leadership Essentials courses for children's services on 28 – 29 October and 7 – 8 November 2015. These events provide a chance for councillors to develop leadership skills in a particular area and share experiences among colleagues dealing with similar challenges. We also held Leadership Essentials courses for adult social care (18 – 19 November), cultural services (3 – 4 November and 2 – 3 December), planning (14 – 15 November and 2 – 3 December) and health and wellbeing boards (18 – 19 November and a forthcoming event on 27 – 28 January 2016)
10. On 17 December 2016, Cllr Judi Billing, as the Lead Member for Leadership Development, spoke at the District Councils' Network's National Development Conference for officers. For their theme *Working in a Political Environment* Cllr Billing gave valuable insight linked to the LGA's Be a Councillor campaign on councillor diversity to 60 talented officers on a 12 month programme to support them as they start their local government careers.
11. It is a record-breaking year for bookings onto LGA political leadership development programmes. With 50 events already delivered we will have provided around 80 political leadership development events in total by the end of March 2016. To date, we have over 800 delegates registered to attend these events from 266 authorities and including 57 leaders. Due to demand, an additional Leadership Academy has been added to our development programme and will start in February 2016.
12. We ran two of the new one-day master classes under Highlighting Political Leadership for members on *Consultation and Engagement* and *Leading Cultural Change*. Both received positive feedback and the final master class on *Risk Management* will take place in February 2016.

### **Productivity**

13. More than [100 additional councils](#) are joining the [One Public Estate programme](#), which the LGA is leading with the Cabinet Office. In addition, the Government has announced £31 million of extra funding to expand the programme to more areas. The programme enables local councils to work with other public sector organisations to share buildings and services, reduce running costs and release land for development, and is an excellent example of local government leadership and efficiency.

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## **People & Places Board – report from Cllr Mark Hawthorne (Chairman)**

### **Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill**

1. People & Places Board Members have continued to work with the City Regions Board to lead the LGA's lobbying on the Cities & Local Government Bill (the Bill) as it continues through Parliament to ensure that the Bill facilitates the most flexible, locally-led negotiations. Royal Assent was expected in December, but will now be early 2016.
2. Recently, the Government tabled a number of amendments regarding "consents" to Combined Authorities. Government also tabled a new amendment giving the Secretary of State (SoS) the power to take back health functions, after they have been devolved, without local consent. These Government amendments have triggered a great deal of concern in the sector and the LGA has been briefing MPs<sup>1</sup> based on steer from both Boards. Officers have also produced a briefing on the implications of the new amendments to the Bill for member authorities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Devolution: LGA Support Offer**

3. Take up of the LGA's devolution support offer, drawn up with direction from the People & Places and City Regions Boards, has been very good, and officers have received positive feedback from councils on the range of services that have been used. Andrew Campbell (Associate Director) has met with groups of councils in every part of the country and his connections have been particularly valuable in helping local areas gain insight into the thinking of Whitehall departments as they prepare for their challenge sessions with Ministers.
4. The [DevoNext hub](#) continues to receive positive feedback from the sector with a number of new features added in the past few weeks, including:
  - 4.1. A short video to explain what combined authorities are.
  - 4.2. Links to the September proposals and summaries of the devolution deals that have been announced.
  - 4.3. Links to useful resources developed by local authorities.
  - 4.4. Links to research and analysis to bolster the evidence base for bids.
  - 4.5. Infographics illustrating the benefits of devolution for businesses and what could be gained by devolving skills and employment support.
5. The LGA has also organised several well-attended events on devolution including:
  - 5.1. A national conference on communicating about devolution in Birmingham on 21 October.
  - 5.2. A joint national conference with SOLACE on governance in a new world on 27 November.
  - 5.3. Two events for elected members to explore place-based leadership in the context of devolution as part of the LGA's Leading Edge and Leaders' Programme.
  - 5.4. The first meeting of a new network the LGA has established to support council officers working on devolution.
6. As most places move to an implementation phase, officers will receive steer from members on how best to focus current resources on implementation and sharing emerging practice.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7318899/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal_content/56/10180/7318899/ARTICLE)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7611125/ARTICLE#sthash.SsqilYOO.dpuf](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses/-/journal_content/56/10180/7611125/ARTICLE#sthash.SsqilYOO.dpuf)

### **The evidence base for devolving employment, skills and welfare**

7. The People & Places and City Regions Boards commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Inclusion) to develop a devolved employment model for the most disadvantaged jobseekers including Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) work-ready claimants which could be flexible enough to apply in all areas across England. The proposal was submitted to Ministers in early November by myself, alongside Sir Richard Leese CBE and Cllr Izzi Seccombe, to influence Spending Review decisions.
8. The Spending Review announced a new specialist Work & Health Programme (WHP), to replace Work Programme and Work Choice contracts in 2017, for claimants with health conditions or disabilities and those unemployed for over two years. This announcement reflects many principles set out in the LGA proposal (but we understand it will be a much smaller programme with low levels of funding). Given that so many decisions are yet to be taken, the LGA is at the forefront of discussions with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to influence these. In response to a letter from the Employment Minister Priti Patel, Sir Richard Leese and I are seeking a Ministerial meeting to take forward LGA ideas. A roundtable session with councils and DWP will take place at the end of January.
9. In speaking at a national Universities UK event on 20 October on the implications of devolution, I highlighted the history of partnership working between universities and local areas and the future key challenges both partners will have to tackle together such as the chronic skills shortages in key industries across the country, such as construction.

### **Superfast Broadband and Mobile Connectivity**

10. As part of the Board's Superfast Broadband and Mobile Connectivity work programme, we are undertaking a nationwide survey of councils involved in both the Government-funded Mobile Infrastructure Project and the Superfast Broadband Programme to assess each programme's performance to date, reflect back to Government any lessons learnt from the sector, and shape Board activity in this area going forward.
11. I met the Chair of the Culture Media and Sport Committee, Jesse Norman MP, as part of his Committee's Inquiry into 'Establishing World-Class Connectivity throughout the UK, and used the meeting as an opportunity to highlight the LGA's submission to the Inquiry, and lobby the Chair to receive an LGA representative to submit oral evidence in person.
12. Separately I also met with senior Government officials from Broadband Delivery UK, to share the emerging findings of the survey the Board had commissioned, and discuss ways that Government and the LGA could work together going forward. Chris Townsend (Chief Executive) and Andrew Fields (Head of Operations) from Broadband Delivery UK will be attending the January Board meeting for them to us on the progress of the Superfast Broadband Programme and how the Government is seeking to expand provision to the most hard to reach residents across the country.

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## **Resources Portfolio – report from Cllr Claire Kober (Chair)**

### **Spending Review & Local Government Finance Settlement**

1. On 25 November, the Chancellor presented his Spending Review which set the overall path of public spending, including local government, for the next four financial years. The results of the Review were not as adverse to local government as widely expected and we take this as a sign that the Government listened to the concerns of the sector that were raised through the Autumn. We provided an on-the-day briefing for members as well as running a media briefing session, co- led by Portfolio colleague Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE, which resulted in significant follow-up coverage.
2. On 17 December, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government published the provisional 2016/17 local government finance settlement and consultation which showed how the decisions made as part of the Spending Review reflect on allocations of grants to individual local authorities. We provided an on-the-day briefing and discussed the consequences further in the annual finance conference which I chaired. At the time of writing, an official response to the settlement consultation was being prepared in line with the timescales set by the Government.

### **Business Rates retention**

3. We continue to work with the Government on implementation of full retention of business rates, due to come in by 2020. This is a complex reform which requires careful consideration so that it doesn't have an adverse impact on councils which are currently reliant on top-ups as part of the system, while maintaining a strong incentive. An important aspect of this is management of the financial risk of business rates appeals, avoidance and evasion – we are working with the Government on options to manage this risk and expect to hear more in Budget 2016 on 16 March.

### **Local Government Finance Conference**

4. On 6 January, I chaired the LGA's annual local government finance conference, this year titled 'Forward View'. We heard addresses from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Greg Clark MP, Steve Reed MP provided the Labour perspective, and LGA officers and council finance directors discussed the implications of, and responses to, the Spending Review and the local government finance settlement. The event was well attended, with approximately 100 paid delegates.
5. Cllr John Fuller, Vice-Portfolio Holder jointly ran a workshop on financing new housing alongside Cllr Keith House, Deputy-Chair of the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board.

### **Financing infrastructure and growth**

6. As part of the Financing Infrastructure and Growth Portfolio Grouping, Cllr Fuller and four Portfolio colleagues initiated a capital financing workshop with Barclays and legal experts Mills & Reeve, as a fact finding exercise to explore options for councils to access capital funds. This meeting took place on Monday 11 January and is part of the Portfolio's overall aim is to construct an 'innovation inventory' setting out ways that councils can best access finance and who can provide it.
7. As part of his role in jointly leading the Portfolio's work on European & Structural Investment Funding (ESIF), Cllr Roger Phillips represented the LGA at the Technical Assistance Working Group (TAAG) meeting on 14 December. TAAG provides advice to help facilitate the

management by the Managing Authorities and, as appropriate the Growth Programme Board of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) Technical Assistance (TA) Programmes in England so that they achieve the TA Objective. Key actions agreed were the revised Terms of Reference for the working group, together with a detailed analysis of how many of the outline TA applications have gone forward to full application stage.

### **Welfare**

8. Cllr John Fuller gave evidence on behalf of the LGA to the Work and Pensions Select Committee hearing on the local welfare safety net on 2 December. Cllr Fuller argued that Government is increasingly relying on local government to ensure that the most vulnerable households are able to respond effectively to the welfare reforms. He made the case for greater freedom to integrate and co-locate services, and for adequate and appropriate long-term funding for the local safety net. A full transcript of the session is available [here](#).
9. Cllr Claire Hudson brought together the Resources members who are leading the welfare reform work stream in mid-December. Members discussed and agreed to take responsibility for the following priorities: Cllr Sue Murphy CBE is leading on welfare, employment & skills; Cllr David Renard is leading on welfare and housing; and Cllr Aaron Shotton is leading on families. Cllr Claire Hudson will have oversight of the whole work stream and will also make connections with other key areas including Health.

### **Local Government Services**

10. Council employees have been offered a two-year pay increase from 1 April 2016. The majority of employees - those on salaries starting at £17,714 per annum - would receive an uplift of one per cent on 1 April 2016 and a further one per cent on 1 April 2017, with those on lower salaries receiving higher increases to take account of the new National Living Wage.
11. The total increase to the national paybill resulting from this offer is 2.4% (£364.175m) over 2 years (covering the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018). Approximately 0.4% of this figure is designed to meet our immediate obligations under the National Living Wage and to start the process of moving towards the expected level of the National Living Wage by 2020.
12. The Trade Unions met on 7 January and decided the basis on which they will consult their members on the Employers' offer.

### **Public sector exit payment cap**

13. The LGA continues to lobby Government on the planned introduction of an exit payment cap for public sector employers to take into account concerns raised by local authorities. The Enterprise Bill is making its way through Parliament at the moment and efforts have been made to ensure that sufficient consideration is given to the detail of the operation of the cap before its implementation, expected to be in the latter half of 2016. In November, briefing were issued to the regional groupings advising them of our understanding of how the exit payment cap will work, who it will effect and how it is expected to interact with pensions strain costs.

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## **Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Simon Blackburn (Chair)**

### **The annual Safer & Stronger Communities conference**

1. On 9 December the Safer and Stronger Communities Board held its Annual Safer Communities Conference. Cllr Morris Bright, Vice Chairman of the Board, chaired the morning session. Karen Bradley MP, Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation, spoke at the conference outlining the key role of Community Safety Partnerships and I responded for the LGA.

### **Prevent case studies publication**

2. The LGA has produced a set of case studies which look at the diverse range of activities underway in six councils to tackle extremism. The councils are Birmingham, Bristol, Calderdale, Cornwall, the Royal Borough of Greenwich and London Borough of Waltham Forest. The councils have been involved in a range of activities including working with schools, looking at taxi licensing and using football to bring communities together.

### **LGA trading standards review workshop**

3. Cllr Anita Lower attended a stakeholder group workshop held as part of the LGA's trading standards review, alongside councillors, chief executives and senior officers, Lord Harris (Chair of the National Trading Standards), the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers and Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

### **LGA Selector Panel – Sustainable Communities Act hearing (Newham council's FOBT stakes application)**

4. Cllr Tony Page gave evidence to the LGA Selector Panel hearing convened to consider whether to resubmit to government Newham council's application to reduce maximum stakes on B2 gaming machines( referred to as Fixed Odds Betting Terminals) to £2. The Selector Panel reached a view that the application met the SCA criteria to be resubmitted, and has written to government to advise them of this.

### **Westminster eForum event – the future of gambling legislation**

5. Councillor Page also spoke at a Westminster eForum event on gambling. Cllr Page outlined the LGA's view that councils and the gambling industry should work together more to tackle specific local issues linked to gambling premises, but that councils also need stronger powers to enable them to respond to residents' concerns about betting shop clustering.

### **National Operational Guidelines**

6. Councillor Kay Hammond, attended the National Operational Guidance Programme's Parliamentary Seminar. Councillor Hammond spoke about the pressures and challenges facing fire and rescue services as we look to the future.

### **National FGM Centre**

7. The Board's Deputy Chair Cllr Lisa Brett, spoke at the first conference held by the National FGM Centre. Cllr Brett also spoke at a Westminster Briefing event on FGM in November and highlighted the work of the Centre. Along with Cllr Brett and Cllr Roy Perry from the Children and Young People Board I also wrote to the Minister for Children and Families about the National FGM Centre's future shortly before Christmas.

### **The role of Fire and Rescue Authorities**

8. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee, Cllrs Jeremy Hilton and Kay Hammond, spoke at a Public Policy Exchange conference on the role of Fire and Rescue Authorities in building safe and healthy communities.

**Financial Sustainability of the Fire Service**

9. Following the publication of the two National Audit Office reports in early November on the impact of funding reductions on the fire service and the financial sustainability of the fire service, Cllr Jeremy Hilton gave evidence at a pre-panel session to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

**Advisory Board for Female Offenders**

10. In early December Cllr Janet Daby attended the Ministry of Justice's Advisory Board for Female Offenders, which is chaired by the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Women, Equalities and Family Justice.

**HMIC PEEL Effectiveness and Legitimacy Reference Group**

11. Cllr Sophie Linden attended the Reference Group Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary have established to support the assessment of police forces' performance.

**Emergency Planning, Response and Recovery**

12. The Ministers for Housing and Planning and Local Government contacted the LGA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) at the end of November about local authorities' preparedness for winter weather and meeting their civil contingencies responsibilities. I wrote back with Cllr Peter Box, Chair of the EEHT Board before Christmas to set out what the LGA had done to help councils prepare and respond to civil emergencies, and raised the issue of funding for flood protection infrastructure.

**Trading Standards**

13. Cllr Nick Worth, the Board's lead on regulatory matters, warned of the risks of purchasing puppies from illegal dealers ahead of Christmas, which have often been bred on puppy farms abroad before being brought into the country illegally. The LGA urged people to buy pets from reputable breeders or rehoming centres.

**Domestic Abuse**

14. With concerns being expressed about the funding of refuge services for victims of domestic abuse I highlighted the support councils provide victims alongside other partners including the use of sanctuary schemes and panic rooms and the provision of counselling. I also highlighted the work councils are doing to raise awareness of the issue.

**Fake Alcohol**

15. In the run up to the New Year celebrations I warned of the risks the public faced if they bought fake alcohol, including the serious risks to health from counterfeit goods that could contain chemicals such as chloroform and methanol. The media release also highlighted recent work by trading standards teams to tackle the sale of illegal alcohol including the seizure of 130,000 litres of counterfeit vodka from a factory.

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## Note of last Councillors' Forum meeting

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**Title:** Councillors' Forum  
**Date:** Thursday 22 October 2015  
**Venue:** Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p><b>Richard Harrington MP - Syrian Refugees</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to Councillors' Forum. He also welcomed Richard Harrington MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Syrian Refugees.</p> <p>The Minister praised the local authorities for their responses so far to the crisis and commented on the offers of aid he has already received from local authorities across the UK. He explained that refugees are assessed against UNHCR criteria of vulnerability so people being resettled in the UK are those most in need.</p> <p>The Minister outlined the priorities for his department, working closely with local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extending the Vulnerable Persons Programme which operates in many local authorities to help in resettling refugees.</li><li>• Expanding the number of local authorities that national Government is working with, acknowledging that circumstances are different in different areas.</li><li>• Working with some local authorities to establish the appropriate funding arrangements to ensure that refugees are protected while keeping costs to a minimum.</li></ul> <p>The Minister paid tribute to the response of local people, but confirmed that the Government is not looking for individuals to host refugees in their homes because of issues such as child protection.</p> <p>The floor was opened up to questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members asked for clarification on whether Government funding to support asylum seekers would move to wherever the individual was resettled, rather than remain with the local authority with which they were first placed. Members also asked that the wider dispersal arrangements for asylum seekers should not be</li></ul>	

decoupled from the more recent 5 year programme for Syria announced by the Prime Minister.

- With specific reference to London, Members stressed that unless the Housing Benefit Cap was raised, most London councils would be unable to take any refugees.
- Members emphasised the need for a more equitable dispersal of families across the country under the wider scheme, and raised the point that in certain areas some refugees were being placed in hotels due to lack of capacity.

In response, the Minister gave his commitment that funding would move with the refugees as opposed to remaining with the original council. The Minister confirmed that there were no plans to raise the current Housing Benefit Cap, but that Government were considering introducing some kind of top up system.

The Minister acknowledged the need for a more equitable dispersal system across the country and that this would be looked at by his team. He reiterated that resettlement is voluntary so no local authority should feel that Government is putting pressure on them to receive more refugees than they can provide for.

Members commented that in some areas the only barrier to local authority involvement is funding, and the need for this to continue until the individuals are able to financially sustain themselves. A key part of this is ensuring the efficiency of the assessment process and capacity to ensure that the whole system is working together.

## **2 Membership and Terms of Reference for 2015/16**

Members **noted** the Membership and Terms of Reference.

## **3 Chair's Update**

Members **noted** the Chair's update.

## **4 LGA Boards & Panel Chair's Reports**

Members **noted** the reports from each of the LGA Board Chairs.

## **5 Digest of the last meeting**

The minutes were **agreed**.

**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman		
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Jim McMahon OBE Cllr Marianne Overton MBE Cllr David Hodge	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Lincolnshire County Council Surrey County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming Cllr Sean Anstee	Sevenoaks District Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Members	Cllr Simon Cooke Cllr Claire-Louise Leyland Cllr Robert Bucke Cllr David Acton Cllr Roger Phillips Cllr Neil Clarke MBE Cllr Melvyn Caplan Cllr Simon Henig Cllr Kate Haigh Cllr John Merry CBE Cllr Amy Cross Cllr Lisa Brett Cllr Howard Sykes MBE Cllr Bob Dutton OBE Cllr Claire Kober OBE Cllr David Burbage MBE Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE Cllr Mike Eathorne- Gibbons Cllr Tony Jackson Cllr Sean Anstee Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick Cllr John Fuller Cllr Peter Golds Cllr Ivan Ould Cllr Timothy Swift Cllr Richard Watts Cllr David Wilcox OBE Mayor Dave Hodgson Cllr Peter Reeve Cllr Alan Seldon	Bradford Metropolitan District Council Camden Council Tendring District Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council Herefordshire Council Rushcliffe Borough Council Westminster City Council Durham County Council Gloucester City Council Salford City Council Blackpool Council Bath & North East Somerset Council Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Wrexham County Borough Council Haringey Council Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough Gloucestershire County Council Cornwall Council East Herts Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council North Norfolk District Council South Norfolk District Council Tower Hamlets Council Leicestershire County Council Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council Islington Council Derbyshire County Council Bedford Borough Council Cambridgeshire County Council Herefordshire Council
Apologies	Cllr Gillian Brown Cllr John Beesley Cllr Paul Bettison Cllr Phil Davies Cllr Vince Maple Cllr Daniella Radice Cllr Philip Atkins Cllr Colin Noble Cllr Philippa Roe Cllr Bryony Rudkin	Arun District Council Bournemouth Borough Council Bracknell Forest Borough Council Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Medway Council Bristol City Council Staffordshire County Council Suffolk County Council Westminster City Council Suffolk County Council

Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	High Peak Borough Council
Cllr Graham Chapman	Nottingham City Council
Cllr Nick Forbes	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Cllr Sue Woodward	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Helen Holland	Bristol City Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Claire Hudson	Mendip District Council
Cllr Chris Townsend	Mole Valley District Council
Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Blake Pain	Harborough District Council
Cllr Roy Perry	Hampshire County Council
Cllr Mike Bell	North Somerset Council
Cllr Kevin Bentley	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Isobel Darby	Chiltern District Council
Cllr Ralph Bagge	South Bucks District Council
Cllr Stephen Parker	Hart District Council

In Attendance

LGA Officers





# LGA location map

## Local Government Association

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## Public transport

Local Government House is well served by public transport. The nearest mainline stations are: Victoria and Waterloo: the local underground stations are

**St James's Park** (Circle and District Lines), **Westminster** (Circle, District and Jubilee Lines), and **Pimlico** (Victoria Line) - all about 10 minutes walk away.

Buses 3 and 87 travel along Millbank, and the 507 between Victoria and Waterloo stops in Horseferry Road close to Dean Bradley Street.

## Bus routes – Horseferry Road

- 507** Waterloo - Victoria
- C10** Canada Water - Pimlico - Victoria
- 88** Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

## Bus routes – Millbank

- 87** Wandsworth - Aldwych
- 3** Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

For further information, visit the Transport for London website at [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

## Cycling facilities

The nearest Barclays cycle hire racks are in Smith Square. Cycle racks are also available at Local Government House. Please telephone the LGA on 020 7664 3131.

## Central London Congestion Charging Zone

Local Government House is located within the congestion charging zone.

For further details, please call 0845 900 1234 or visit the website at [www.cclondon.com](http://www.cclondon.com)

## Car parks

Abingdon Street Car Park (off Great College Street)

Horseferry Road Car Park  
 Horseferry Road/Arneway Street. Visit the website at [www.westminster.gov.uk/parking](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/parking)

