

# Our commitment to our member councils

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party membership organisation working on behalf of councils to give local government a strong, credible voice with national government.

We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they can deliver local solutions to national problems. We fight local government's corner, supporting councils through challenging times and focusing our efforts where we can have real impact.

Our membership includes English and Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, national parks authorities and town councils. Working with, and on behalf of, our membership we:

- influence critical financial and policy decisions and shape and develop the policies that local government needs
- use our seat at the negotiating table to secure the best deal for councils from Britain's exit from the EU, pressing for more powers to be devolved from Whitehall – and from the EU – to local government
- pick up emerging government thinking, ensuring councils' views are represented
- work with public, private, community and voluntary organisations to secure their support for local priorities
- coordinate collective legal action on behalf of member councils
- promote local government and defend its reputation through the local, regional and national media
- support councils to share best practice, drive innovation and improvement and to continue to deliver essential services
- in our role as national employer, negotiate fair pay and pensions and provide support and advice on workforce issues
- deliver broader services to local government via our joint ventures and wholly owned companies such as Local Partnerships, GeoPlace and Public Sector Audit Appointments.

# Our vision for local government

Britain's exit from the EU means that we are reshaping the way our country is run. Our vision is one of a rejuvenated local democracy, where power from Westminster and from the EU is significantly devolved to local level and citizens feel they have a meaningful vote and real reason to participate in civic life and their communities.

Economic growth is boosted in a way that offers prosperity to every place, with well-targeted and planned investment in infrastructure, training and housing and support that leads to jobs and an adequate supply of affordable homes.

Public services are transformed so that they focus on preventing problems instead of just picking up the pieces, delivering positive outcomes for all, but in particular for our children and young people. Services are built around people and their needs, joining up to make the best use of resources, to have a positive impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities and to make local areas better places to live.

# Our focus for 2017/18

To support this vision, we will concentrate our activities on seven areas in the year ahead:

## **Britain's exit from the EU**

Local government has a strong and influential voice during Britain's exit from the EU negotiations, securing the best deal for councils and ensuring that the different needs of different local communities are fully recognised.

## **Devolution and funding for local government**

A radical re-think of local governance and accountability achieves a real shift in power to local people and a refocus on local democratic leadership. This must be underpinned by reforms to the finance system that gives councils the confidence their financing is sustainable and fair, with opportunities to raise more funds locally and greater ability to promote collective working across local public services.

## **Inclusive growth, jobs and housing**

Councils are recognised as central to revitalising local economies and providing decent life chances for all residents.

## **Children, education and schools**

Councils have the powers and resources they need to bring partners together in their local place to ensure all children get the support and high quality education they deserve.

## **Adult social care and health**

Councils are well placed to support their citizens to live healthy, active lives and to remain at home and independent for as long as possible. Their capacity to do this is dependant on sustainable funding and more effective integration with health services.

## **Supporting Councils**

Councils are responsible for their own performance, effectiveness and efficiency, accountable before all else to their local communities.

## **A single voice for local government**

The LGA is the national voice of local government supporting and working on behalf of councils and councillors across England and Wales.

# Our priority campaigns

We will work to secure the powers and fiscal freedoms councils need to enable them to lead their local areas through the biggest changes in the coming years. Our priority campaigns for 2017/18 are:

## **Britain's exit from the EU**

Our work to make the case for local government's requirements from Brexit will focus on calling for powers and funding to go from Brussels to local areas, not to Westminster and will lobby to ensure that decision makers understand the legal and funding implications for local government.

## **Sustainable funding for local government**

To ensure that councils are empowered to bring together local public services, making them more responsible to local need and fit for the next decade and beyond, we will be calling for a reformed funding base.

We will be calling for continued joint working with Government to ensure that further business rates retention is introduced in a way that gives councils maximum fiscal independence but which recognises it could also bring with it increased risk for the sector.

## **Children's social care and wellbeing**

With a £2 billion funding gap for children's services expected by 2020, we will be pushing for urgent action to be taken to reduce the financial pressures and a renewed focus on investing in early intervention.

## **Work local**

Work Local is the LGA's positive vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service – bringing together information, advice and guidance alongside the delivery of employment, skills, apprenticeships and wider support for individuals and employers.

## **Housing**

Our Housing campaign will be a national, integrated programme of work calling on the Government to give councils the powers and funding to resume their role as a major builder of affordable homes and to establish local government as the expert and leader in the housing sector.

## **Adult social Care**

We will be calling on the Government to set out in detail its proposals to close the funding gap for adult social care services by 2020 and for the upcoming consultation on social care to consider a full range of options to share the risks of high care costs effectively.

Working with partners across the sector, we will also support a multi-organisational social movement to increase the profile, and raise awareness of the importance of, social care with the general public, politicians and stakeholders.

# Britain's exit from the EU

Local government has a strong and influential voice during Britain's exit from the European Union negotiations, securing the best deal for councils and ensuring that the different needs of different local communities are fully recognised.

## **A seat at the negotiating table – we will:**

- act as the voice of local communities and ensure that the different needs of different localities are represented and heard
- ensure that negotiations focus on those issues that matter most to local government and lead the negotiations on behalf of the sector.

## **Constitutional reform – we will:**

- be a leading voice in redesigning how the UK works, and take advantage of the opportunity to seek the entrenchment of local government within our new constitutional settlement.

## **Local economic developments – we will:**

- work to secure the £5 billion of regeneration investment guaranteed to local economies from EU structural funds to 2020 up until we leave the EU and lobby for alternative UK sources after we leave
- help redefine future regional aid and state-aid rules which have, to date, been defined in Brussels.

## **Disentangling councils' legal base – we will:**

- develop a revised legal framework for those local government services which are currently based on EU laws – for example, environmental policy, air pollution and energy waste
- ensure that repatriated laws and regulations are not centralised in Whitehall.

## **Community cohesion – we will:**

- ensure that councils are supported to work in partnership to build community cohesion and promote integration, tackle extremism, implement the 'Prevent' duty and develop a sector-led approach to sharing good practice.

## **Exiting the EU and place – we will**

- ensure that there is an evidence base to demonstrate the risks and opportunities of exiting the EU by place and how these differ by geography.

# Devolution and funding for local government

A radical re-think of local governance and accountability achieves a real shift in power to local people and a refocus on local democratic leadership. In the context of the growing financial crisis facing councils across England and Wales, this must be underpinned by reforms to the finance system that enable councils to plan and deliver essential public services beyond the short term and give them confidence that their financing is sustainable and fair, with opportunities to raise more funds locally and greater ability to promote collective working across local public services.

## **Funding for local services is appropriate, timely and demand-led – we will:**

- continue to press for funding for English local government that reflects the current and future demand for services, including full retention of business rates to find growing pressures.
- continue to highlight at every opportunity the consequences for local government of central government reforms and press for adequate funding, particularly in the areas of housing, adult social care and children's services
- work with local and central government on a fairer funding formula for local government that supports effective long term planning, is an evidence based reflection of needs and resources, is simpler and more transparent and has appropriate transition mechanisms

## **Councils have the powers and responsibilities to tackle the big challenges facing the country – we will:**

- work in partnership with government, business and others to ensure that communities in England and Wales have more responsibility to make decisions on the issues which are of greatest importance to their lives
- provide direct support to combined authorities and councils to support the implementation of devolution deals and the development of growth plans and new models of governance models, through leadership development programmes, expert support, online tools and information
- develop models of economic growth and service delivery that demonstrate how devolution can lead to better outcomes and work with councils to make the case to government

## **People have a meaningful local voice on a wide range of tax and spending decisions – we will:**

- lobby for a local government finance system that promotes self-reliance and self-sufficiency, encourages entrepreneurialism and innovation, promotes local decision-making on service delivery and maintains support for the most vulnerable
- press for freedoms that lead to greater local financial autonomy with a view to achieving local control over and retention of both council tax and business rates

- develop proposals to improve business rates, the business rates appeals system and to modernise valuation and collection
- build a case for the right to determine new local taxes and set fees and charges which fully recover costs.

**Councils are able to access alternative sources of finance to encourage investment and create jobs – we will:**

- lobby to free local government borrowing from Treasury restrictions
- develop policy improvements in capital financing and contribute to national reviews in this area.

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# Inclusive growth, jobs and housing

Councils are recognised as central to revitalising local economies and providing decent life chances for all residents and as key partners in delivering the government's Industrial Strategy.

## **Councils have a key role to play in driving economic growth, new jobs and wealth creation – we will:**

- support city regions and non-metropolitan areas to deliver a better economic and social future for their citizens and effective local industrial strategies
- support councils to work with partners to maximise the value of local and national infrastructure investment, including road, rail, broadband and local assets (with Local Partnerships)
- support councils to work with universities and higher education institutions to maximize the benefits of strong, joined-up local leadership
- lead a debate on future the role of local government in trade and inward investment.
- support local innovation to better deliver digital infrastructure and continue to press for a regulatory framework that will deliver the best deal for customers.

## **Councils play a lead role in working with businesses to match education, training and skills with employer needs – we will:**

- campaign for people of all ages to be supported to participate in quality skills development and training, including independent careers advice and a passport for lifelong learning
- promote good employment practices in helping apprentices, interns and NEETs (not in education, employment or training) into work, including a series of national events for young apprentices
- continue to press for councils to be given the power, funding and lead responsibility to integrate and commission back to work, skills and welfare support under a devolved model.

## **Councils unblock the barriers to house-building and drive the increase in housing supply the nation needs – we will:**

- seek to ensure that high rise residential buildings are safe in the future by submitting evidence to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, contributing to the review of building regulations, and lobbying for the additional resources councils need to carry out remedial work to their own tower blocks and work to assess other buildings
- continue to make the case for councils to increase housing supply, promote affordable housing and make more effective use of surplus public sector land
- support consortia of councils to access significant development funds for housing through the creation of new partnership models



- support councils to initiate discussions exploring options that free councils from restrictions on their borrowing to build homes, including removing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing contributing towards national public debt
- seek to ensure councils have the tools to manage the housing impacts of welfare reform and the 2016 Housing Act.

**Councils have the levers they need to maximise the impact of their culture services as drivers of growth – we will:**

- support councils to make the most of their cultural, sporting and heritage assets and to have greater control over the levers of growth for their local visitor economy.

**Councils facilitate economic growth and strong local communities through the development of risk-based, business-friendly public protection services – we will:**

- lead a debate on the key role of councils in building safer and more resilient communities and in preventing crime in particular through early intervention
- lobby for greater flexibility in the licensing system to enable councils to manage their local economy, including making the case for the localisation of licensing fees while also pressing for the review of gambling stakes to continue
- promote reform of the law around taxi-licensing to ensure it is fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and support councils to improve taxi licensing, helping them understand the links between licensing and child sexual exploitation.

# Children, schools and education

Councils have the powers and resources they need to bring partners together in their local place to ensure all children get the support and high quality education they deserve.

## **Councils lead the way in driving up educational standards – we will:**

- set out a clear vision for councils' role in promoting high educational standards for all children and young people, whatever type of school they attend, accompanied by the appropriate resources, powers and flexibilities to ensure every child has access to a place at a good local school
- lobby for a stronger role for councils in making sure that new schools are fit for purpose, high quality and value for money, including a lead role for councils in decisions about new free schools.

## **Schools have the funding they need to deliver the best education for all pupils – we will:**

- lobby to ensure the introduction of a national funding formula for schools retains an element of local flexibility to allow councils and schools to reflect local needs and priorities
- highlight the growing pressures on the high needs budget which supports pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and lobby the government to provide councils with sufficient funding and flexibility to meet rising demand

## **Councils keep children safe – we will:**

- highlight the £2 billion funding gap in children's services funding and make the case for adequate funding and investment in early intervention approaches
- Work with partners to develop and secure DfE funding for a sector-led approach to improving children's services
- continue to support councils to protect children and young people from child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism and improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

## **Councils have the flexibility and resources to deliver services that meet the needs of children and young people – we will:**

- support councils to take a place-based approach to children and young people's health issues, including childhood obesity and child and adolescent mental health services
- work in partnership to improve life chances for disadvantaged households, particularly those with young children, making the case for early intervention and improved integration of services for families

# Adult social care and health

Councils are well placed to support people to live safe, healthy, active lives and to remain at home and be independent for as long as possible. Their capacity to do this is dependant on sustainable funding and more effective integration with health services.

## **Councils are able to secure sufficient resources to deliver effective, integrated social care services – we will:**

- work with government and opposition parties to seek cross party solution to the sustainable funding of social care and vision of future services.
- campaign to close the funding gap in adult social care, predicted to grow by at least £700 million a year, highlighting the impact of winter pressures, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and implementation of the Living Wage on budgets and the provider market.
- continue to support implementation of the Care Act and work with government and other partners to understand the issues for the phase two reforms.

## **Councils lead the debate on the future vision for health and social care – we will:**

- continue to promote a clear vision of councils' role in planning and delivering health and care systems, with the integration of health and care at its centre
- support areas to escalate the scale and pace of integration; make the case for a lighter touch approach to Better Care Fund plans and lobby for areas who have made good progress to move beyond a national mandate
- campaign for health and wellbeing boards, and other bodies reflecting strategic place-based approaches, to have a leading role in driving forward health and social care commissioning as part of closer integration
- continue to lobby for a key role for councils and councillors in sustainability and transformation partnerships to ensure local democratic accountability for redesigning health and care services
- work with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Care, Department of Health and NHS England to refresh and roll out the Care and Health Improvement Programme to help councils and health and wellbeing boards deliver sustainable local services with increased public, regulator and government confidence.

## **Councils have a central role in promoting health and wellbeing locally – we will:**

- commission a full cost benefit case for investing in prevention as a basis for educating different sectors on how they can contribute, including by encouraging the public to live well and provide self-care
- work with partners to continue improving public health and promote the role of wider preventative work within local areas' overall health and care systems.

**Councils support the vulnerable and elderly – we will:**

- assist councils to support carers, improving dementia and mental health services, tackling the challenges and exploiting the opportunities of an aging population, and better supporting those with autism and learning difficulties
- continue to work with councils to deliver the Armed Forces Community Covenant
- support councils to reduce domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, modern slavery and anti-social behaviour.

**Councils actively work with the NHS to ensure that health and care services are built around the needs of local populations – we will:**

- work with health colleagues to ensure that strategic transformation partnerships will help drive genuine and sustainable transformation in patient experience and health outcomes of the longer-term
- support areas negotiating the devolution of health resources and decision-making to escalate the scale and pace of health integration.

**Councils continue to play a leading role in the design and delivery of blue light services – we will:**

- support a positive debate about future blue light collaboration and influence the implementation of the inspection regime for the fire and rescue service, as well as the establishment of a new professional standards body
- support fire and rescue authorities to make the service more representative of the communities they serve, and support greater collaboration between the service and health
- work with fire and rescue authorities to ensure that any change in governance arrangements for the fire and rescue services are agreed locally and backed by a robust business case
- work with police and crime panels to strengthen their scrutiny of police and crime commissioners, including PCCs' new responsibilities for the fire and rescue service.

# Supporting councils

Councils are responsible for their own performance, effectiveness and efficiency, accountable above all else to their local communities.

Our support offer reflects feedback from the sector and is based on what we know works for improvement: strong political and managerial leadership; challenge and support from peers; productivity and efficiency support; access to comparable performance data and learning from each other. Take up of the offer is strong and there is an expectation that every council will have a corporate peer challenge or finance peer review at least every four-five years.

Importantly the offer provides different tiers of support depending on the intensity of the challenges councils are facing locally. This means we are able to offer practical bespoke support packages to help councils respond to severe local challenges or address significant underperformance issues.

Our offer of support to the sector is funded by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) grant and organised around four themes. Key offers under each theme are as follows:

## **Challenge and support from peers lies at the heart of local government's approach to improvement – we will:**

- maintain an overview of councils' performance, using this information to drive improvement, manage the risk of significant underperformance and minimise government intervention
- deliver up to 110 peer challenges involving councillor and senior officer peers from councils and other organisations, including corporate peer challenges, service specific peer challenges, financial challenges and place based peer challenges
- provide direct support to at least 150 councils and groups of councils each year, especially those with the most severe performance challenges or to resolve issues between the political and managerial leadership
- share best practice of councils who are finding new and effective ways of working to secure outcomes for their communities at significantly less cost
- through LG Inform, our online data and benchmarking service, provide free council and public access to transparent performance information. LG Inform Plus will give councils access to small area data reports and tools and support authorities to drive improvement
- provide direct support, through our partnership with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), to develop scrutiny skills and expertise
- with Local Partnerships, support councils to make savings by providing commercial advice and support on matters of legal and contractual complexity.

**Strong political and officer leadership is at the heart of local democracy and an essential pre-condition for continuous improvement – we will:**

- support at least 700 councillors with leadership roles in their councils – including those in opposition – through our suite of leadership programmes
- support at least 60 ambitious and talented councillors with the potential to progress in their political careers through our Next Generation programme
- support the leadership development of managers in councils, in partnership with SOLACE, including secondment opportunities with central government
- help councils, political groups and the national parties to attract new talent to get involved in civic life through our ‘Be a Councillor’ programme
- provide member peer support for at least 20 councils where there has been a change of political control, including new e-learning opportunities for all councillors, particularly induction and community leadership skills
- recruit up to 100 high calibre graduates to local government working with councils to secure interesting and challenging placements, as part of a two year National Graduate Development Programme, building links with other public sector graduate programmes.

**Councils continue to be the most efficient part of the public sector – we will:**

- develop more opportunities for councils to enter collaborative procurement arrangements, saving councils at least £10 million a year
- support at least 25 councils to realise efficiency savings through our productivity expert programme, saving the councils in total at least £25 million
- help councils to develop a more commercial approach to their activities, achieving savings or generating additional income of £10 million
- provide bespoke political and officer support for at least 40 councils to help them address issues around financial sustainability, integrated budgets, and managing the risk of new delivery models
- provide a matchmaking service for councils who wish to share services and/or management teams and promote good practice through our web-based interactive shared services map
- equip 18 more councils with the skills and confidence to use design to improve public services and manage future demand for them
- in collaboration with CIPFA, help councils to be more proactive in dealing with fraud
- work with councils, sector representative bodies, DCLG, Cabinet Office and the National Cyber Security Centre to highlight the importance of cyber security and cyber resilience to protect our data and systems.
- support councils work to improve fire safety in their own tower blocks and other high rise buildings, as well as addressing any safety issues that arise from buildings constructed using the large scale panels method.
- work with councils, SOLACE, DCLG and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat to strengthen emergency planning and resilience preparations through appropriate training for councilors and senior managers, promoting the use of new civil resilience

standards to assess preparedness, and sharing knowledge and experience from within the sector

- work with partners to create innovative solutions to the challenge of bringing together workforces, improving organisational performance and productivity, better aligning pay and reward to performance and recruiting and retaining talent
- lead pay negotiations and deliver cost-effective pay settlements for councils that address the challenge of the National Living Wage, supporting councils to develop an employment deal relevant to 21st century public servants
- provide specialist advice and support for the Local Government Pension Scheme  
provide sector specific advice on a range of employee relationship issues including employment law and job evaluation
- deliver a programme of support to help councils achieve their apprenticeship targets and maximize their levy investment
- support 80 councils to transform their workforces and modernise the way they are managed..

# A single voice for local government

The LGA is the national voice of local government supporting and working on behalf of councils and councillors across England and Wales.

## **A national membership body for local government – we will:**

- maintain membership levels amongst local authorities in England and Wales by continuing to offer membership benefits that meet the sector's changing needs and expectations
- maintain subscriptions at current levels and continue to communicate on the benefits of membership directly with individual councils and all councillors
- seek to attract organisations with an interest in local government into associate membership.

## **A supportive membership body – we will:**

- coordinate collective legal action and new burdens applications on behalf of councils
- provide political support to individual councillors and to council administrations through our political group offices.

## **A politically-led organisation – we will**

- implement the constitutional changes agreed by the General Assembly in July 2017 to provide a strong framework for the Association and its membership
- ensure that combined authorities, authorities with devolution deals and elected mayors are appropriately represented on our governance arrangements.

## **Persuasive and transparent communications – we will**

- work to support, promote and improve local government using the full range of communications activity
- continue to develop all channels of communication in line with the transparency agenda, to deliver accessible information and communicate with key audiences and stakeholders.

## **Financial sustainability – we will:**

- continue to develop the commercial activities of the LGA and its joint venture companies to ensure the long term sustainability of the organisation
- invest in Layden House and Local Government House to increase their capital values and maximise our income from fully commercial lettings.

## **Efficient business management – we will:**

- continue to streamline our company structures to deliver a solid and tax-efficient base from which to run our business, including incorporation of the Association



- through our partnership arrangement with the London Borough of Brent, continue to roll out a programme of ICT development that supports our drive for greater efficiency and flexibility and aligns with our overall priorities.

**Supportive people management – we will:**

- undertake a review of our future leadership needs and put in place a leadership development programme for our current and aspiring managers
- carry out a staff survey to ensure that we have a comprehensive understanding of our workforce and put in place a programme of actions and activities that respond to the results.

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# Our service delivery partnerships

**Local Partnerships** – is a joint venture between the LGA and HM Treasury, formed in 2009 to help the public sector deliver local services and infrastructure. It offers support to local authorities in the following areas:

- developing and reviewing strategic business cases and business plans
- service transformation and change
- modelling and legal frameworks for alternative service delivery models
- options' appraisal and assurance of chosen approaches or options
- forming effective partnerships (inter-agency brokerage)
- sourcing and commissioning, contract negotiation and management
- economic development and planning
- delivering infrastructure

**GeoPlace** – is a joint venture between the LGA and Ordnance Survey, formed in 2010 in response to a government call to bring together existing creators and suppliers of addressing data to one central place to build a single, definitive address database. It works in close collaboration with local authorities to:

- create and maintain data models
- cleanse and validate data
- provide support and training to councils ensure high quality, cost effective and timely data.

**Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA)** – is an independent company limited by guarantee incorporated by the Local Government Association in August 2014. PSAA is responsible for:

- appointing auditors to local government, police and local NHS bodies for
- setting audit fees
- making arrangements for the certification of housing subsidy claims