

Chief Executive's Report – April 2019

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The LGA business plan for 2018/19 centres on seven external priorities:

- Funding for local government;
- Adult social care and health;
- Children, education and schools;
- Housing;
- Inclusive growth, jobs and devolution;
- Britain's exit from the EU; and
- Supporting councils

Part 1 of the six-weekly Chief Executive's report sets out the LGA's main achievements against those priorities. Part two focusses on our internal priority – *a single voice for local government* – including membership and our media outreach activities.

Recommendation

That the LGA Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for April 2019.

Action

As directed by members.

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Chief Executive's Report – April 2019

Achievements against our external priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- 1.1 **2019 Spring Statement:** the Chancellor delivered his 2019 Spring Statement on 13 March. In his [speech](#) and associated [documents](#), Philip Hammond MP set out the direction of the Government's thinking on the 2019 Spending Review and a range of areas of interest to local government. On the day of the Statement, we issued a [media statement](#) and a [bulletin](#) summarising the announcements of potential interest to local government. We briefed Leaders, Chief Executives and parliamentarians on the key measures for local government. We also [briefed](#) peers ahead of a debate on the economy in light of the 2019 Spring Statement. In this debate, Baroness Thornhill [called](#) on the Government to listen to our warning that the current funding settlement for local government is unsustainable.
- 1.2 Our work around the 2019 Spring Statement is covered in more detail elsewhere on the Leadership Board agenda.
- 1.3 **2019 Spending Review:** subject to an EU exit deal being agreed, the Government will hold a Spending Review which will be launched before the 2019 Summer Recess and conclude alongside the 2019 Autumn Budget. This will set departmental budgets, including 3-year budgets for resource spending (covering 2020/21 to 2022/23).
- 1.4 The 2019 Spending Review is covered in more detail elsewhere on the Leadership Board agenda.
- 1.5 **MHCLG inquiry into local government finance and the 2019 Spending Review:** the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee announced an [inquiry into local government finance and the 2019 Spending Review](#) which will consider how effective the existing funding set-up is in providing resources to meet the need and demand for local services now and in the future. The deadline for submissions is 17 April 2019 and the LGA will be submitting evidence.
- 1.6 **Council finances:** a new [report](#) from the Institute for Fiscal Studies has examined the case for giving councils more power over taxation, including the possibility of bringing in a dedicated local income tax. In our [response](#), we reiterated our key message that if councils were given greater control over their own finances and local economies, new approaches and better decisions could be made around funding services. This will be part of our [#CouncilsCan](#) campaign, which aims to influence the forthcoming 2019 Spending Review and highlight the growing risk to vital local services if the Government does not take action to secure the financial sustainability of councils.
- 1.7 **Funding gap:** our [analysis](#) of the overall funding gap facing local government in 2019/20 was referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn MP, during Prime Minister's Questions. The figures show that local services face a funding gap of £3 billion this year.
- 1.8 **Treasury Select Committee inquiry into the impact of business rates on business:** we made a submission in response to a Treasury Select Committee inquiry into the [Impact of Business Rates on business](#). The inquiry includes the impact of changes in business rates policy since 2017 on businesses and how the current business rates system measures up to principles for good taxation such as fairness, supporting growth, and providing certainty and coherence.
- 1.9 **Financial management:** the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy is consulting on a new [Financial Management Code](#) which aims to support good practice and to assist councils in demonstrating financial sustainability. The consultation closes on 30 April and we will be submitting a response.
- 1.10 **Audit report:** the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published a report on auditing local government. The report covers both local NHS bodies and local authorities, and comes further to a

National Audit Office (NAO) report which showed that local government performs well in terms of value for money. The NAO report found that 98 percent of chief finance officers feel they can give challenging advice to elected members. The PAC report contains some important recommendations for central government, and we will be talking to MHCLG about their response to the report.

- 1.11 **Public Accounts Committee evidence session on local authority governance:** our Chairman, Lord Porter, provided evidence to the PAC's evidence session on local authority governance on 27 March. He highlighted the benefits of sector led improvement and emphasised that there is no need to return to an Audit Commission style system.
- 1.12 **Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally (FFCL) – conference and awards:** we supported the Board of Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally in arranging a well-attended conference in March to highlight good practice in counter fraud activity across the sector and to raise fraud awareness with council leadership teams. As well as looking at council activities, the conference included a session with senior staff across the sector investigating the wider impacts of fraud activities on communities.
- 1.13 **Local bus funding:** Paul Woods, Interim Chief Finance Officer at the North East Combined Authority, gave evidence to the Transport Committee on behalf of the LGA, as part of its inquiry into local bus funding. This was an opportunity to inform the Committee of the £652 million funding gap facing local concessionary bus services.
- 1.14 Both Business Rates Retention and the Fair Funding Review are covered by separate items on the agenda of Leadership Board.

Priority 2 – Adult social care and health

- 2.1 **Adult social care:** we held a briefing for parliamentarians on our adult social care green paper, The lives we want to lead. Parliamentarians commended the LGA for taking forward the green paper and called on the Government to publish its own at the earliest opportunity. They also raised concerns about the lack of support for carers and reductions in direct payments and personal budgets of people with care needs. Social care funding also featured during questions to the Housing, Communities and Local Government ministerial team. This was followed by an exchange during Treasury Questions, with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury highlighting the additional money provided for social care in the 2018 Budget.
- 2.2 **Care homes:** Independent Age has published its annual study into care home performance across England. It serves as further evidence of the significant pressures across the system and the need for action through the Spending Review and the forthcoming green paper. We responded to the findings, emphasising that local authorities work closely with their care providers and the Care Quality Commission and, overall, quality is improving.
- 2.3 **Sexual health:** colleagues from Public Health England, appearing before the Health and Social Care Committee this week, highlighted the good work councils are doing to commission sexual health services. New diagnoses of HIV are down by 28 per cent since 2015. Since local government took on the commissioning of sexual health services in 2013, in many cases they have become better integrated, more efficient and more accessible. However, there is still much work to do, and we will continue to work with colleagues across public health and the NHS to improve outcomes.
- 2.4 **Public health conference:** on 21 March, we held our sixth annual Public Health Conference and Exhibition. Over 200 delegates attended the 23 plenary and workshop sessions over the day. Attendees heard from high level speakers like Steve Brine MP, Health Minister, Ruth Sutherland, Chief Executive of the Samaritans, Bev Taylor from NHS England and Professor Sian Griffiths, Deputy Chair of Gamble Aware. It was a great opportunity to hear the very latest thinking on key policy and improvement agendas, comment on, and shape policy at the highest level, and network with peers. One the same day, we also launched 'Public health transformation six years on: partnerships and prevention'. The report shows the excellent work that public health in local government is doing to

commission for quality and best value across all areas of public health.

- 2.5 **Social Care Digital Innovation Programme:** twelve councils have been selected for the discovery phase of the third wave of the Social Care Digital Innovation Programme 2019-21. Projects include exploring managing hydration in care homes in North Somerset, using technology to improve home care in North East Lincolnshire and improving travel in Camden. Final reports from the 2018-19 programme will be published over the next two months including results from carers testing exoskeletal devices in the Isle of Wight and the biometric technology trials with people with autism in Wirral.
- 2.6 **Drugs policy:** we submitted written evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee inquiry on drugs policy. Our evidence highlighted the work of councils in addressing some of the pressures associated with drugs and alcohol addictions in local communities.
- 2.7 **Accessible homes for older people:** we submitted written evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Ageing and Older People's inquiry on decent and accessible homes for older people. Our submission highlighted the impact of poor and inaccessible housing and the affect older people's health and care.

Priority 3 – Children, education and schools

- 3.1 **Children's centres:** our analysis has shown that councils have been forced to cut their spending on children's centres by nearly a quarter in four years, down to £480,513,000 in 2017/18 compared with £637,265,000 in 2014/15. This is at a time when councils are looking after some 75,420 children, more than at any time since the 1980s. Councils are also spending 18 per cent more on children in care while the money for children's centres and wider preventative services is falling. The services these facilities provide are often a lifeline for children and parents alike, and we are working hard to take this message to Government as part of our 2019 Spending Review campaign.
- 3.2 **Parliamentary report on children's services:** the Public Accounts Committee referenced our evidence that councils are working tirelessly to support vulnerable children and that in 2017/18, £8.8 billion was spent on children's social care in its report on Transforming Children's Services. The report also notes the rising pressures facing children's services, quoting our data that 91 per cent of councils overspending on children's services in 2017/18 with increased referrals and more children being taken into care. The report states that the Department for Education has not done enough to ensure the sustainability of quality and funding for children's social care and calls on it to outline the reasons for the variation between the activity and cost of children's social care across councils.
- 3.3 **Troubled families:** we highlighted the pivotal role councils have played in making the Troubled Families Programme a success for some of the most vulnerable families. New evidence published by Government has shown the programme is improving outcomes for families across a number of measures. The Government must continue funding this vital service, as it is one of the few remaining sources of early intervention funding for councils.
- 3.4 **Health visitor numbers:** we underlined the need for urgent action to deal with a significant fall in numbers of children's health visitors. Since 2015 there has been a 20 per cent drop in the number of full-time equivalent visitors working in the NHS. This has led to the current system being stretched to its limits as the numbers of vulnerable children and families goes up. We are calling on Government to reverse the £531 million cash terms reduction to public health budgets between 2015/16 and 2019/20. This will enable more health visitors to be trained and recruited by councils who can then provide more help and support to vulnerable children and families.
- 3.5 **Resolution Foundation skills report:** a report from the Resolution Foundation has found that there has been a slowdown in the growth in the education levels of our young people. In our response we highlighted the importance of an education and training system that councils can adapt to their changing local jobs market. This must include providing young people with a compelling choice of both

academic and technical pathways, a National Retraining Scheme for adults to gain skills for new jobs, and devolved and adequately resourced UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Local Industrial Strategies. These will allow councils and their partners to plan how their local economies can enable growth that benefits all.

- 3.6 **Foster carers:** our Deputy Chairman, Cllr David Simmonds, appeared on Newsnight to highlight what councils are doing to support the vital work of foster carers, whilst protecting the interests of each child. He emphasised that what councils share with foster carers will clearly depend on the individual circumstances but the presumption will always be to share as much information as possible.
- 3.7 **Nurseries:** maintained nursery schools have received a £24 million funding boost for the 2019/20 academic year. This is good news, and we are pleased the Government has acted on our concerns. Councils have been making clear that additional funding is needed urgently to secure the future of maintained nurseries. Our nurseries provide a high level of crucial support to disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs, but cannot do so unless funded properly.
- 3.8 **National Deaf Children's Society survey:** we responded to survey results from the National Deaf Children's Society. It found 58 per cent of specialist teachers felt there was less support available for deaf children than in 2014, while 43 per cent thought pupils were now performing worse. This confirms our key message that the pressures facing councils in helping pupils with special educational needs and disabilities continue to increase, while the money is just not there. Councils are working hard to help give all our children the education they deserve.
- 3.9 **Child gangs:** MHCLG announced a £9.8 million fund in support of community projects to confront knife crime and gang culture. A total of 21 councils have successfully bid for a share of £9.5 million to help young people and families vulnerable to the effects of gangs. A further £300,000 will also be available for local authorities across England to train frontline staff on how to tackle childhood trauma. There have been some concerning findings published by the Office of the Children's Commissioner on child gangs. The research has revealed there are an estimated 27,000 children in gangs in England, with only a small number known to authorities. We have pointed out that councils are working hard to identify and protect children and young people at risk, but were forced to cut spending on local youth services by nearly 40 per cent between 2010/11 and 2016/17.
- 3.10 **Youth services:** the National Citizens Service (NCS) is set to receive over £10 million for a branding refresh. We have outlined how some of the scheme's funding would be more effective if devolved to local youth services. The NCS is a Government-led voluntary initiative which only a small number of eligible youngsters take part in. Whilst the NCS is a positive experience, funding youth services would be more effective in providing young people with local opportunities all-year-round. Councils have had to reduce spending on youth services from £652 million in 2010/11 to £352 million in 2017/18.
- 3.11 **Breaking the cycle of youth violence:** in March, we published our report on 'Breaking the Cycle of Youth Violence'. The report contains a number of case studies which demonstrate how councils and their partners are taking the lead on tackling youth violence and intervening early to divert young people away from a life of serious violent crime.
- 3.12 **Children's services event:** we are holding an event on commissioning children's services on 1 May in Birmingham. It will focus on working closely with suppliers, recruiting foster carers and how councils can make savings by joining up on future procurements.
- 3.13 **Children's services funding gap:** our analysis of the funding gap facing children's services was quoted by Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee member Matt Western MP during a session with the Ministry of Housing and Communities and Local Government Minister, Rishi Sunak MP, and the Department for Education Minister, Nadhim Zahawi MP. Additionally, Bridget Phillipson MP quoted the LGA's estimate of a £3.1 billion funding gap in children's services in a parliamentary question about additional funding for children's services.
- 3.14 **Special educational needs and disabilities:** we briefed Caroline Lucas MP (Green, Brighton

Pavilion) regarding schools funding and pressures on SEND.

Priority 4 – Housing

- 4.1 **Homelessness:** our survey warns that 83 per cent of councils have seen a rise in homelessness presentations following the Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force on 1 April 2018. National statistics show that councils are still housing more than 83,000 households, including 123,000 children, in temporary accommodation, including in bed and breakfasts, hostels and private rented accommodation. We are pressing for councils to have the stable, long-term funding to tackle homelessness by preventing it in the first place, and asking the Chancellor to close the £100 million gap facing councils' homelessness services in his Spending Review.
- 4.2 **Housebuilding:** councils are set to utilise their new powers to borrow and invest in housing under the Housing Revenue Account, our recent survey has found. Whilst these new powers are positive, further reforms are needed if councils are to play a full role in tackling the housing crisis. It is encouraging that 94 per cent of stock-owning councils told us they will use the new powers to accelerate housebuilding. The majority of those councils asked in our survey also want more reform from the Government, including changes to Right to Buy, so that councils can retain 100 per cent of receipts and set discounts locally.
- 4.3 **Modern methods of construction:** as part of our parliamentary engagement on housing, our Chairman, Lord Porter, gave evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee on modern methods of construction (MMC). The inquiry is looking at how councils and central government can support new and non-standard construction to help deliver the homes we need. Lord Porter called for national investment in MMC to make homes manufactured off-site more affordable, and emphasised that planning is not a barrier to getting new homes built. The Committee will be reporting in the coming months.
- 4.4 **Planning:** alongside the Spring Statement, the Government provided an update on its work relating to planning reform and housing delivery. The Chancellor indicated that MHCLG would shortly be publishing additional planning guidance in line with some of Sir Oliver Letwin's recommendations on speeding up build-out rates. It was also announced that an Accelerated Planning Green Paper will be published later this year, to explore ways to hasten the end-to-end planning process.
- 4.5 **Housing, planning and infrastructure:** the LGA's Annual Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Conference took place on 13 March, starting with a keynote address from Kit Malthouse MP, Minister for Housing. The winners of the Future Place programme were announced at the event. Future Place is a joint programme from the LGA, Royal Town Planning Institute, Chartered Institute of Housing, Royal Institute of British Architects and now Homes England to unlock local potential for place-shaping.

Priority 5 – Inclusive growth, jobs and devolution

- 5.1 **Stronger Towns Fund:** the Government published details of the £1.6 billion Stronger Towns Fund. There was confirmation that £1 billion of the new fund will be allocated using a needs-based formula, with the remaining £600 million being available through a competitive process. A breakdown by region of the notional funding allocations is on the Government website. In an exchange on the Fund during Prime Minister's Questions, Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, referred to our analysis of the funding gap facing councils this year.
- 5.2 **High street clean-up:** Government has announced a new, £9.75 million High Streets Community Clean-Up Programme. This will give councils money to spend with local community groups on spring cleans of high streets and town centres. It will support the Great British Spring Clean.
- 5.3 **Town centres and high streets:** we have continued supporting member councils on the high streets

agenda with two packed events. On 17 January we held the second masterclass on 'Creating Better Towns', drawing in experts from retail, public realm and commercial property to provide focused discussion and learning for lead officers and elected members. This was followed by a conference, 'Taking control of your town centres', on 14 February, attended by over 100 delegates, which included case studies of councils who have demonstrated strong leadership in taking key decisions in support of their town centres, including ownership of commercial assets as well as tackling difficult issues such as anti-social behaviour.

- 5.4 **Roads repairs:** a Government consultation has been launched on increasing the guarantee on utility firms' roadworks. There are also plans to introduce new asphalt standards to keep roads pothole-free for longer. This is good news for travellers, and could also help to lessen a little pressure on councils' over-stretched budgets used to make good shoddy repairs. The new asphalt standard will help to prevent some potholes, but long-term funding is still desperately needed to address the £9.79 billion roads repair backlog.
- 5.5 **Potholes:** a new report from Asphalt Industry Alliance's Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) has indicated that the number of potholes repaired by councils in England and Wales rose by more than a fifth last year, to 1.86 million. It also found that spending on roads maintenance rose by 20 per cent, but suggests much of the £24.5 million was spent on short-term "patch and mend" work. The one-time cost of fixing the entire road network rose to £9.79 billion. We responded, highlighting that the 2019 Spending Review needs to provide councils with long-term and consistent funding to invest in the resurfacing projects which our road network desperately needs over the next decade.
- 5.6 **Waste and recycling:** the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have issued a suite of consultation papers on the future of waste and recycling policy. The four consultations cover household recycling, a deposit return scheme, producer responsibility, and plastic packaging. It is essential that we make our voice heard on these changes to the funding and design of waste services in the future. The Treasury is running a parallel consultation on proposals for a tax on plastic packaging. An LGA conference on the consultation proposals will take place on 4 April 2019.
- 5.7 **Air quality:** a review of interventions to improve air quality and health has been conducted by Public Health England. The review aims to create a 'clean air generation' of children, and make sure new developments are clean by design. Responding, we said that air pollution is a public health emergency and councils are determined to reduce the impact of harmful emissions on our communities. Councils also need local powers to further tackle air pollution, particularly to enforce moving traffic offences.
- 5.8 **Bus travel:** local bus passenger journeys in England have fallen by 1.6 per cent in the past year. This reflects the downward spiral of decline in bus journeys, driving the fare increases which exacerbate the reductions to local bus funding. Our response to the stats highlighted councils' commitment to protecting these vital services in our communities. Ahead of the Spending Review, we are urging the Government to give councils control over the Bus Service Operators' Grant, and properly fund national free bus pass schemes.
- 5.9 **Tree felling and woodlands:** we responded to the consultation on proposals for a new duty for councils to consult results about the felling of street trees. It is right that councils decide locally how best to involve tenants. Should the proposals be implemented they must be treated as a new burden and fully funded.
- 5.10 **Modern Slavery:** we have warned that referrals of potential victims of modern slavery made by councils have soared ninefold in five years. The National Crime Agency's figures show that the rate of council referrals has increased by 66 per cent in the last year alone. No specific funding is given to councils to support victims of modern slavery, and we are urging the Government to use the Spending Review to provide more funding for councils to help tackle modern slavery.
- 5.11 **Female genital mutilation:** we briefed Sarah Champion MP (Labour, Rotherham) on our priorities around FGM, ahead of a debate on the Children Act 1989 (Amendment) (FGM) Bill. During the

debate, Ms Champion highlighted the need to fund the National FGM Centre beyond 2020. She and Maggie Throup MP (Conservative, Erewash) also highlighted figures from our briefing regarding the Centre, where we highlighted its vital role in keeping children and young people safe from FGM, breast flattening and child abuse linked to faith or belief.

- 5.12 **Gambling related harm:** we briefed MPs ahead of a debate on gambling related harm. Our briefing called on the Government to introduce a mandatory levy on the gambling industry to fund research, education and treatment. This follows our successful campaign to reduce Fixed Odds Betting Terminals stakes to £2 and the guidance we have published on taking a whole council approach to tackling gambling related harm to support councils.
- 5.13 **The Post-Brexit England Commission:** the roadshows have now visited all English regions outside London and heard from over 200 non-metropolitan stakeholders on the opportunities and challenges their rural areas are facing, post-Brexit. External research has also been commissioned to identify the opportunities for local government to play an enhanced role in the successor arrangements to Pillar 1 of the Common Agricultural Policy with a final draft delivered for sign-off. The Commission's final report will launch at LGA Annual Conference 2019.
- 5.14 **Future trade policy:** we have continued to engage with the Department for International Trade (DIT) and other key national stakeholders on the role of local government in future trade policy, and Marian Sudbury, Director of UK Regions at DIT, attended the People and Places Board in March and the City Regions Board in early April to discuss DIT's place-based work. An externally commissioned report to support councils to attract foreign capital investment into local infrastructure has also been drafted and delivered for final sign off.
- 5.15 **UK-France Summit:** we have continued to support councils' international engagement activity and LGA officers supported MHCLG in the delivery of the UK-France Summit hosted in London on 7 March at which a number of LGA members attended and spoke.
- 5.16 **Coastal communities funding:** Government announced funding for coastal communities, with 70 projects receiving a total of £36 million to go towards supporting innovative businesses, protecting historic buildings, new museums and restoration of much-loved coastal heritage sites. While we welcome the additional money, we will continue to make the case that more extensive and consistent investment is needed in our communities.

Priority 6 – Britain's exit from the EU

- 6.1 At the time of writing, Parliament will tomorrow be holding a series of indicative votes on possible Brexit scenarios. **A detailed update of all of our work in preparation for Brexit is covered by another item on the agenda of Leadership Board.**
- 6.2 **Article 50 extension:** the Prime Minister secured an option to extend the Article 50 process to 22 May if her Brexit Deal is supported by Parliament. If the Deal is not supported, the option to extend is until 12 April by which time the UK must either seek a longer extension or leave on that date without a deal.
- 6.3 **Delivery Board:** the Local Government Brexit Delivery Board met and we heard from Rishi Sunak MP, Local Government Minister, and Caroline Nokes MP, Home Office Minister. The Board received an update from Ms Nokes on the UK Settled Status Scheme ahead of its launch on 30 March, as well as other ministers from across Government on departmental preparations. Colleagues from the three devolved nations – COSLA, WLGA and NILGA – were also in attendance and provided an update on their progress on preparing for when the UK leaves the EU.
- 6.4 **MHCLG Brexit stocktake:** on 18 March, there was a stocktake of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's and councils' Brexit preparedness with the most senior Whitehall officials. Mark Lloyd (LGA) was also in attendance, making the case for council's preparedness.

- 6.5 **Brexit and local government inquiry:** we briefed Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chair of the LGA Brexit Taskforce, ahead of him giving evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee for its Brexit and local government inquiry.
- 6.6 **EU Elections:** in all our discussions with ministers and senior officials we continue to highlight the massive challenges the continuing uncertainty regarding EU elections presents for returning officers. We've been assured that there are no consequences for local elections on 2 May.
- 6.7 **Community engagement:** Government has published new guidance for councils on how they can understand, engage and reassure their communities in the lead up to, and following, our exit from the EU. It highlights what councils are already doing to engage and support communities. This forms part of Government's broader efforts to support councils.
- 6.8 **Health and Social Care:** we briefed MPs ahead of a debate on Brexit and health and social care. We highlighted the role that councils play in commissioning and providing vital services for their communities, including social care and public health services.

Priority 7 – Supporting Councils

7.1 **LGA Annual Fire Conference:** held on the 12-13 March in Brighton, our annual fire conference was attended by over 260 delegates, speakers and exhibitors and included a range of plenary sessions and workshops covering a variety of issues relating to fire and building safety. At the conference we called for the introduction of stricter fire suppression rules to ensure fire safety in all high-rise buildings and care homes – not just those over 30 metres. It is crucial that automatic fire safety measures are installed in all new premises where vulnerable people sleep. Sprinkler systems have been proven to be effective, and we will continue to call for their wider use to provide reassurance to residents and the public.

7.2 **Culture-led regeneration:** we held our culture and tourism conference. At the event we published new research into how 15 areas were achieving a culture-led approach to regeneration. We have looked at those councils using existing assets in different ways, as well as those who have led cultural regeneration. Our research also assesses councils' creation of festivals, strategic planning and skills investment. The case studies provide practical information on the techniques used and types of investment secured.

7.3 **Apprenticeships Week:** during National Apprenticeships Week, we celebrated the importance of apprenticeships and called for much-needed reform of the current system. Our Skills Taskforce has held a series of roundtables with industry experts and council representatives, with the aim of making our skills system as effective as possible. We also launched an apprenticeship self-assessment and support toolkit, an updated version of our apprenticeships maturity model for councils – a self-assessment toolkit to help benchmark progress on apprenticeships. The National Audit Office (NAO) used Apprenticeships Week to launch a report into the apprenticeships system. Its findings show a 26 per cent fall in apprenticeship starts between 2015/16 and 2017/18. It also showed that many employers are still struggling to spend their Apprenticeship Levy funds. Whilst we support the Government's ambition to create three million apprenticeships by 2020, councils must be involved in the review of the Levy to ensure its success.

7.4 **LGA Apprenticeships Survey:** we have published the results of our 2019 Apprenticeship Survey, with analysis suggesting the sector is on course for a 20% increase in starts – a second consecutive year of growth. Levy spend continues to be quite low, with only a modest increase on last year, and two-thirds of councils expect they will see funds expire before the end of September 2019. This reinforces our case for increased flexibility in the apprenticeships policy and we have been calling on the Government to: extend the two year limit to spend the Levy against standards which have only just been approved or are still in development; allow pooling of Levy contributions to enable more strategic local planning; permit a more flexible use of the Levy to meet the full costs of apprenticeship programmes; and give local areas a say on how to allocate unspent Levy money and non-Levy funds.

7.5 **Innovation and best practice in social work:** Lyn Romeo, Chief Social Worker for Adults in England, launched her fifth Annual Report, Social Work Leadership in Changing Times. As in previous years, the

annual report features examples of innovation and best practice in social work around the country. Following on from the [Wigan Deal](#), which was featured in last year's report, a new [video](#) has been produced to reflect the transformation work happening in Southend Borough Council.

7.6 Councillors' toolkit: we have produced a new [toolkit](#) which is aimed at helping those who have other responsibilities, such as looking after children or caring for an older relative, to be councillors. The toolkit, which has Government backing, aims to support councils in creating the right environment for people of all circumstances to seek elected office. We continue to work towards increasing diversity and inclusion, including through our [Be a Councillor](#) campaign and Women's Network. It is important that we encourage more women, parents and carers to represent their communities.

7.7 International Women's Day: our [briefing](#) on the services councils provide to support women was quoted in the House of Lords [debate for International Women's Day](#) by Baroness Donaghy. We also made sure to mark International Women's Day by promoting the invaluable contribution of women in local government through our social channels and the media.

7.8 Leisure facilities: our [briefing](#) highlighting the challenges local authorities are facing to maintain leisure facilities including swimming pools was quoted in a [debate on swimming and life-saving skills](#) by Lord Addington and Lord Watson of Invergowrie.

7.9 Local Industrial Strategy: delivery of the LGA's Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) improvement support offer has progressed significantly, including three fully-booked LIS masterclass events and a national stakeholder roundtable with cross-sector representation.

Internal Priority – A single voice for local government

LGA Membership

8. All LGA member councils will remain in LGA membership for the forthcoming year.
 9. Four councils are currently on notice to leave the LGA on 31 March 2020. They are:
 - 9.1 East Staffordshire Borough Council;
 - 9.2 Hastings Borough Council;
 - 9.3 Leicestershire County Council; and
 - 9.4 Lincolnshire County Council.
 10. The Broads Authority National Park and Exmoor National Park Authority are also on notice to leave on 31 March 2020.
 11. Four councils remain out of membership – the London Boroughs of Bromley, Wandsworth and Barnet and Gosport Borough Council.
 12. As a result of local government reorganisation, fifteen authorities ceased to exist on 31 March 2019:
 - 12.1 Poole Borough Council;
 - 12.2 Bournemouth Borough Council;
 - 12.3 Christchurch Borough Council;
 - 12.4 North Dorset District Council;
 - 12.5 West Dorset District Council;
 - 12.6 Weymouth & Portland Borough Council;
 - 12.7 Purbeck District Council;
 - 12.8 East Dorset District Council;
 - 12.9 Dorset County Council;
 - 12.10 Forest Heath District Council;
 - 12.11 St Edmundsbury Borough Council;
 - 12.12 Suffolk Coastal District Council;
 - 12.13 Waveney District Council;
 - 12.14 West Somerset District Council; and
 - 12.15 Taunton Deane Borough Council.
 13. East Suffolk District Council, West Suffolk District Council, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council were all admitted into membership from 1 April 2019. The application from Somerset West and Taunton Council appears as a separate item on the agenda.
- ### **Transition to LGA Unlimited**
14. The staff of the unincorporated LGA were transferred by TUPE to the new company on 1 April 2019, along with the pension scheme, all contracts, joint ventures and other legal agreements. Our finance arrangements, including payroll and bank accounts, have all transferred and a new VAT number has been allocated.

15. The first stage in the transfer of properties is underway and a separate item on the transfer of 18 Smith Square is included on the agenda. To avoid additional complexity, it is proposed to defer the transfer of LGMB until completion of the refurbishment.
16. In July 2018, General Assembly resolved to delegate to the Leadership Board the final decision to dissolve the unincorporated LGA, subject to the approval in writing of at least two-thirds of councils in full LGA membership. That approval has been secured. The old LGA will need to reconvene in due course to agree the transfer of Layden House and again to pass the resolution to dissolve once all outstanding business is complete.

Membership engagement by the Strategic Management Team

Chief Executive	
12 March	North West Chief Executive's Meeting, Warrington
<i>Forward Plan</i>	
4 April	Chief Executive, Doncaster Council
4 April	Chief Executive, Newcastle City Council
9 April	Chief Executive, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
10 April	Chief Executive, London Borough of Harrow
11 April	MJ Future Forum, Hertfordshire
30 April	Chief Executive, Welsh LGA
23 May	Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council

Media

Funding for local government
Safer and Stronger Communities Board Chair, Cllr Simon Blackburn was interviewed for Sky News and Sky News Radio on about our press release warning against cuts to councils' youth justice grants when they are announced this month by government. Our release was also referenced in a piece talking about the reasons behind the increase in knife-related incidents (Express, Sky News, Sky News Radio, Sky News Online, Times Online, Mail Online, Guardian Online, ITV Online, Huffington Post, LBC, Talk Radio, LBC, TalkRadio, BBC Radio 5 Live)
Resources Board Chair Cllr Richard Watts response about how councils had lost 60p out of every £1 of government funding for services since 2010 (Express Online)
Chair of the Resources Board, Cllr Richard Watts response to research by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy that found council tax bills in England will increase by 4.5 per cent a year from April (i, 5 News at 5)
Our analysis which found funding cuts forcing children's centres to close (Independent Online, Huffington Post, LBC, i)
Our letter, signed by 14 health and care organisations, calling for the Government to fund the £3.6 billion adult social care funding gap by 2025 and be bold in its long-awaited green paper (Telegraph)
Deputy Chairman, Cllr David Simmonds, pre-recorded an interview with Sky News Radio about our press release warning that children's centres face a fight for survival without new funding from the Government in the Spending Review (Sky News Radio)
Our lines on local areas having control of their own finances (Times)
Our lines on the funding pressures facing councils (iNews)
Our lines on the need to localise business rates reliefs and discounts (BBC Radio 4 You and Yours)
Our report which predicted a shortfall in SEND funding by 2020/21 (Guardian, Observer)
Our response to yesterday's Spring Statement (Huffington Post)
During Prime Minister's Questions the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn MP, referred to

our <u>analysis</u> of the overall funding gap facing local government in 2019/20 (Mirror Online, Sky News, BBC 2 Politics Live, BBC Radio 5 Live, LBC)
Our calculations that £16 billion has been cut from councils' budgets between 2010 and 2020 were reported in a blog on the impact on women of local government cuts (Huffington Post)
Our <u>research</u> which found that prioritised funding for social care services puts libraries and parks at risk of closure (Telegraph)
Adult social care and health
We featured during an interview with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about complaints received over how some councils assess care packages (BBC Radio 4 You and Yours)
Our Social Care Digital Innovation Programme was referred to in a piece about digital innovation in healthcare (Guardian Online)
Our lines on the work councils are doing with the health sector to transform care (LBC, Channel 5 News)
Liverpool City Council featured as one of our council case studies in our new public health <u>report</u> on partnerships and prevention, which was launched at our public health conference today (ITV Online)
Children, education and schools
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the Children and Young People Board, response to the latest term-time absences statistics (Telegraph, Independent, Mirror, Guardian Online)
Chair of the LGA's Asylum, Migration and Refugee Task Group, Cllr David Simmonds, appeared on BBC Newsnight about councils sharing information with fosters carers when they take in a child or young person (BBC Newsnight)
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the Children and Young people Board, warning on a shortfall in secondary school places (Independent)
Our statement on new research on the number of children living independently in care (BBC Online)
Our <u>response</u> to the NAO report showing apprenticeship starts have reduced (BBC Online)
Housing
Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the Community Wellbeing Board, <u>response</u> to the Independent Age analysis on the standards of care homes in local authorities (Mail Online)
Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the Community Wellbeing Board, featured in a piece about care homes (Express Online)
Our Homeless Reduction Act survey, which found that 83 per cent of councils saw a rise in homelessness presentations following the implementation of the Act (Independent)
Our lines on new powers given to councils to force privately-owned tower blocks to remove dangerous cladding (22 March) (Guardian)
Our <u>calls</u> for tougher sprinkler rules to ensure fire safety in high-rise buildings and care homes, (Good Morning Britain)
Inclusive growth, jobs and devolution
Chair of our City Regions Board, Sir Richard Leese, featured in a piece with our response to a Centre for Cities' report on skills (i paper)
Our figures about how the number of people directly employed by local government has fallen by a third in ten years (Huffington Post)
Supporting councils
Improvement and Innovation Board Chairman, Cllr Peter Fleming, was interviewed on our lines on how any income raised through on-street parking charges is spent on running parking services and any surplus is only spent on essential transport projects (LBC, Mail Online, Express, Sun)
Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Resources Board, was interviewed live on BBC Radio 5 Live about Local Welfare Assistance (BBC Radio 5 Live)
Our response to Press Association research on council garden waste collection services, where we called for any changes to be fully funded (i, Express, Sun, Telegraph, ITV Online)
Our lines on council waste collection services (BBC Online)
The Star featured our previous lines on the dumping of supermarket trolleys (20 March) (Star)
Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees mentioned the recent LGA Peer Review on BBC Online (19 March) (BBC Online)
Our lines about how some level of contamination in recycling is inevitable and that councils are

working hard with residents to ensure that as much as possible can be recycled (Mirror)
Our lines on councils installing electric vehicle charging points (Guardian Online)
Our lines on parking charges. Mail Online also featured our lines on road enforcement fines (Express Online, iNews, Mail Online)
Our lines that most councils cannot afford the extra cost of sorting disposable coffee cups from kerbside collections were reported in a piece exploring what efforts coffee chains have made in recycling and reducing the use of such cups (BBC Radio 4 You and Yours)
The LGA's previous peer review of Northamptonshire County Council was referenced on BBC Online
A single voice for local government
Our <u>response</u> to the National Crime Agency statistics, showing an increase in suspected victims of modern slavery has risen since 2013 (FT Online, BBC Online, Express, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5, LBC Radio, Talk Radio, talkSport)
Cllr Martin Tett, our Environment spokesman, featured on ITV's 'Rubbish: Britain's Tipping Point?' programme about waste collections, fly-tipping and recycling (ITV Online, ITV One)
Cllr Martin Tett, our Environment spokesman, took part in the Telegraph's Plastic Sustainability Summit Q&A panel session on sustainability and plastic (Telegraph)
Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of our Culture, Tourism and Sport Board featured in a piece about how both residents and councils should be involved in caring for trees (Sunday Times)
Our <u>response</u> to plans to rebrand the National Citizens Service (Guardian, Mirror Online)
Our <u>response</u> to the Public Health England review of interventions to improve air quality, including banning cars from idling outside schools (FT, Telegraph, Express, Times)
The media reported a response by Leethen Bartholomew, the head of the National FGM Centre which is run as a partnership between the LGA and Barnardo's, to the jailing of a woman for becoming the first person in the UK to be convicted of female genital mutilation (Guardian, Mail Online, Mail Online, Independent Online)