



# **Councillors' Forum**

Agenda

Thursday, 25 January 2024  
12.30 pm

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and  
Online

There will be a meeting of the Councillors' Forum at **12.30 pm on Thursday, 25 January 2024**  
Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online.

Please note: *The Political Group meetings will be held **prior** to this, as follows:*

11.00am	Conservative	Westminster Suite (8 <sup>th</sup> Floor)
11.00am	Labour	Beecham Room (7 <sup>th</sup> Floor)
11.00am	Independent	Victoria Room (8 <sup>th</sup> Floor)
11.00am	Liberal Democrat	Smith Square Rooms 1 & 2 (Ground Floor)

A sandwich lunch will be available in Smith Square Rooms 3 & 4 (Ground Floor)

### **LGA Hybrid Meetings**

All of our meetings are available to join in person at [18 Smith Square](#) or remotely via videoconference as part of our hybrid approach. We will ask you to confirm in advance if you will be joining each meeting in person or remotely so we can plan accordingly, if you wish to attend the meeting in person, please also remember to confirm whether you have any dietary/accessibility requirements. 18 Smith Square is a Covid-19 secure venue and measures are in place to keep you safe when you attend a meeting or visit the building in person.

[Please see guidance for Members and Visitors to 18 Smith Square here](#)

### **Catering and Refreshments:**

If the meeting is scheduled to take place at lunchtime, a sandwich lunch will be available.

### **Political Group meetings and pre-meetings for Lead Members:**

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 3263	email: <a href="mailto:labgp@lga.gov.uk">labgp@lga.gov.uk</a>
<b>Independent:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: <a href="mailto:independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk">independent.grouplga@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>

### **Attendance:**

Your attendance, whether it be in person or virtual, will be noted by the clerk at the meeting.

### **LGA Contact:**

Alexander Saul  
[Alexander.Saul@local.gov.uk](mailto:Alexander.Saul@local.gov.uk)

### **Carers' Allowance**

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme, a Carer's Allowance of National Living Wage and/or London Living Wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) **Telephone** 020 7664 3000 **Email** [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145

Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 0367557

**Chairman:** Councillor Shaun Davies **Acting Chief Executive:** Sarah Pickup CBE **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

## Councillors' Forum – Membership

[Click here for accessible information on membership](#)

Councillor	Authority
<b>Labour ( 37)</b>	
Cllr Shaun Davies (Chair)	Telford and Wrekin Council
Cllr Nesil Caliskan (Vice-Chair)	Enfield Council
Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester City Council
Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble	Hackney London Borough Council
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
Cllr Richard Henry	Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz	Islington London Borough
Cllr Carl Johnson	North Tyneside Council
Cllr Arooj Shah	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Naushabah Khan	Medway Council
Cllr Chris Penberthy	Plymouth City Council
Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
Cllr David Welsh	Coventry City Council
Cllr Jack Hemingway	Wakefield Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Tudor Evans OBE	Plymouth City Council
Cllr Georgia Gould	Camden Council
Cllr Louise Gittins	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cllr Satvir Kaur	Southampton City Council
Cllr Tracey Dixon	South Tyneside Council
Cllr Greg Brackenridge	City of Wolverhampton Council
Cllr David Baines	St Helens Borough Council
Cllr Darren Rodwell	Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council
Cllr Peter Marland	Milton Keynes Council
Cllr Claire Holland	Lambeth London Borough Council
Cllr Bella Sankey	Brighton and Hove City Council
Cllr Tim Roca	Westminster City Council
Cllr Susan Brown	Oxford City Council
Cllr Jane Ashworth OBE	Stoke on Trent City Council
Cllr Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Cllr Fran Belbin	Sheffield City Council
Cllr Dr Beccy Cooper	Worthing Borough Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Andrew Morgan	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Cllr Clyde Loakes	Waltham Forest London Borough Council
Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
Cllr Eamonn O'Brien	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Peter Mason	Ealing Council

Cllr Shama Tatler	Brent Council
Cllr John Cotton	Birmingham City Council
Cllr James Lewis	Leeds City Council
Cllr Helen Holland	Bristol City Council
Cllr Liam Robinson	Liverpool City Council
<b>Conservative ( 34)</b>	
Cllr Kevin Bentley (Senior Vice-Chair)	Essex County Council
Cllr Abi Brown OBE	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr David Fothergill	Somerset Council
Cllr Rory Love OBE	Kent County Council
Baroness O'Neill of Bexley OBE	Bexley Council
Cllr Antony Mullen	Sunderland City Council
Cllr Linda Taylor	Cornwall Council
Cllr Kelham Cooke	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Joanne Laban	London Borough of Enfield
Cllr William Nunn	Breckland Council
Cllr Colin Noble	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Tim Oliver	Surrey County Council
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland District Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Cllr Michael Wilcox	Lichfield District Council
Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset Council
Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Louise McKinlay	Essex County Council
Cllr Sue Woolley	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Matthew Hicks	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Phillip King	Harborough District Council
Cllr John Hart	Devon County Council
Cllr Mark Sutton	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Peter Golds CBE	Tower Hamlets Council
Cllr Holly Whitbread	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Barry Lewis	Derbyshire County Council
Cllr John Fuller OBE	South Norfolk District Council
<b>Liberal Democrat ( 15)</b>	
Cllr Joe Harris (Vice-Chair)	Cotswold District Council
Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Alan Connett	Devon County Council
Cllr Heather Kidd MBE	Shropshire Council
Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE	Portsmouth City Council
Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough
Cllr Sarah Osborne	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Liz Green	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Cllr Vikki Slade	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Tim Pickstone	Cumberland Council
Cllr Caroline Leaver	North Devon District Council
Cllr Howard Sykes MBE	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
<b>Independent ( 12)</b>	
Cllr Marianne Overton MBE (Vice-Chair)	North Kesteven District Council
Cllr Caroline Jackson	Lancaster City Council
Cllr Andrew Cooper	Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Chidi Nweke	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Tony Saffell	North West Leicestershire District Council
Cllr Craig Browne	Cheshire East Council
Cllr Johnny Denis	Lewes District Council
Cllr Nate Higgins	Newham London Borough
Cllr Sue Baxter	Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Colin Mann	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Cllr Caroline Topping	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Georgina Hill	Northumberland Council

# Agenda

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Thursday, 25 January 2024

12.30 pm

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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Item	Page
1. <b>Welcome, Declarations of Interest</b>	
2. <b>Crown Commercial Services</b>	1 - 2
<p>The Councillor's Forum will receive a presentation from Eddie Gibson (National Senior Account Manager, Local Communities and Housing) and David Bemrose (Head of Account Strategy for Local Communities and Housing Sector) from the Crown Commercial Service.</p>	
3. <b>Chair's Update</b>	3 - 8
4. <b>LGA Board Chair Reports</b>	
<p><i>Verbal update at meeting</i></p>	
a) City Regions Board - Cllr Satvir Kaur	9 - 12
b) Community Wellbeing Board - Cllr David Fothergill	13 - 16
c) Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board - Cllr Darren Rodwell	17 - 24
d) People and Places Board - Cllr Martin Tett	25 - 28
<p><i>For noting</i></p>	
e) Children and Young People Board - Cllr Louise Gittins	29 - 32

- f) Culture, Tourism and Sport Board - Cllr Liz Green 33 - 34
  - g) Economy and Resources Board - Cllr Pete Marland 35 - 46
  - h) Improvement and Innovation Board - Cllr Abi Brown 47 - 56
  - i) Safer and Stronger Communities Board - Cllr Heather Kidd 57 - 62
- 5. Digest of the last meeting held on 19 October 2023 63 - 65**

**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday, 7 March 2024, 12.30 pm, Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online





## **Eddie Gibson - National Senior Account Manager, Local Communities and Housing, Crown Commercial Service**



### **Biography**

Eddie is an accomplished, CIPS-qualified commercial professional with experience of UK and international supply chains, including category management for several major retailers, working with budgets of over £100M per annum. In 2006, Eddie moved into the local government sector and, from 2009 onwards, established himself as a leading figure in local government procurement through his regional roles at Improvement East and the East of England LGA. During that time, he sat on the LGA's National Advisory Group for Local Government Procurement and contributed to the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in both 2014 and 2018. Since 2020, Eddie has been at Crown Commercial Service and is now their National Senior Account Manager for Local Communities and Housing, helping to ensure that current and future commercial solutions developed by CCS are fit for purpose and to meet relevant local government service priority and policy needs.

## David Bemrose - Head of Account Strategy for Local Communities and Housing Sector, Crown Commercial Service



### Biography

David is an experienced strategic relationship leader and commercial professional with a career spanning almost 40 years working across both the private and public sector. Since 2008, David has operated exclusively in the public sector working across local government, education and health sectors and, from 2011, was the strategic lead for YPO's founder members in local government and took a lead role for member and strategic officer relationships. During that time David set up and managed the membership development programme for YPO which resulted in the introduction of their Associate Membership structure onboarding over 70 new councils and other public sector organisations. Since 2019, David has been at Crown Commercial Service and is now their Head of Account Strategy for Local Communities and Housing ensuring that the sector's priorities are at the forefront of the CCS future sector strategy and commercial support delivery and has recently led the way on several key sector capability investments funded by CCS.

## Chair's update

This report covers the Chair's activities from 19 October to 25 January

### LGA and Ministerial/Parliamentary business

<b>OCTOBER</b>	
<b>23</b>	Introductory call with Minister Buchan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Housing and Homelessness)
<b>23</b>	Pre-meeting with LGA Asylum Task Group
<b>24</b>	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
<b>24</b>	Call with Minister Jacob Young MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
<b>24</b>	Meeting with LGBTQIA Staff Network
<b>25</b>	Meeting of Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan Ministerial Taskforce, co-chaired by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
<b>26</b>	LGA Asylum Task Group with Minister Jenrick, Immigration Minister
<b>30</b>	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
<b>30</b>	Meeting with Bridget Phillipson MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education
<b>31</b>	Meeting with Sarah Calkin, Editor, Local Government Chronicle
<b>31</b>	BAME and Women's Network Coffee Morning
<b>31</b>	Meeting with Minister Rowley, Minister for Local Government
<b>31</b>	Call with Cllr Richard Kemp CBE, Deputy Lord Mayor of Liverpool, on care leavers and CCLA
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	
<b>1</b>	Call with Cllr Kevin Bentley, Senior Vice-Chair of the LGA and Leader of the Conservative Group
<b>2</b>	Call with the Daily Telegraph regarding temporary accommodation
<b>6</b>	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive

6	Meeting with the BAME Network Steering Group
13	Group Leaders and SMT meeting
13	Meeting with Lord Bichard, with Cllr Marianne Overton, on the White Paper
14	Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review sessions
14	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
14	Meeting with Minister Mercer, as Cross-Government Lead for Care Leavers
14	Call with Cllr John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council, ahead of meeting of South West Leaders
15	Introductory meeting with Minister Hoare, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).
17	Meeting with South West Regional Leaders Meeting
17	Meeting with Recruiter & Head of HR on CEO recruitment
20	Catch-up with Lord Porter at CCN Conference
20	CCN Conference and Annual Dinner
21	All-staff meeting with Group Leaders
21	Meeting of the Ministerial Local Net Zero Forum led by Lord Callanan
21	Informal Group Leaders meeting
22	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
22	Media for Autumn Statement: BBC News Channel, BBC Shropshire
24	Interview with The Observer
26	Interview with Times Radio
30	Interview with LBC
<b>DECEMBER</b>	
6	Interview with LBC News
6	Meeting with Jim McMahon MP, Shadow Minister for Local Government
6	Meeting with Minister Rowley, Minister for Housing and Planning
6	Media with ITV News and Talk TV
6	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
7	LGA Board
7	Executive Advisory Board

11	Meeting with Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration
11	Chaired Roundtable with Minister Mercer, Veterans' Affairs, & Minister Buchan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing and Homelessness.
15	Meeting with Cllr Baggy Shanker, Leader of Derby City Council
18	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
18	Meeting with Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Minister Hoare, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).
18	Meeting with Minister Hoare, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).
19	Interviews for LGA Chief Executive
19	IDeA Board
21	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive
21	Interview with Sky News
<b>JANUARY</b>	
8	Meeting with Sarah Calkin, Editor, Local Government Chronicle
8	Informal Group Leaders meeting
8	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
8	Call with Cllr Claire Holland, Acting Chair, London Councils
9	Meeting with Ed Miliband MP, Shadow Secretary of State of Climate Change and Net Zero
9	Catch-up with Pete Robbins, Head of Labour Group Office, LGA
10	Call with Joanna Killian, Incoming Chief Executive, LGA (from 18 March 2024)
10	Catch-up with DCN Executive
10	Meeting with Liz Kendall MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
10	Meeting with Thangam Debbonaire MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport

15	Right Care, Right Person Roundtable with partners across local government, the NHS, and Police
15	Meeting with Wes Streeting MP, Shadow Secretary of State of Health and Social Care
16	Meeting with London Councils' Leaders
16	Meeting with Yorkshire & the Humber Leaders' Board
17	Meeting with Cllr Tom Hunt, Leader of Sheffield City Council
18	Meeting with Mike Greene, Chief Executive, Stockton-on-Tees Council
19	Meeting with LGA President, Baroness Tanni-Grey Thompson
19	Meeting with Cllr Nick Kemp, Leader of Newcastle City Council
19	Regional visit to North East, Stockton-on-Tees Council
23	Meeting with Minister Hoare, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), with Group Leaders, CCN Chair, DCN Chair, SIGOMA Chair, and Acting Chair of London Councils
23	Meeting with Preet Kaur Gill, Shadow Minister for Primary Care and Public Health
23	Catch-up with Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive, and Sally Burlington, Deputy Chief Executive
24	Launch of report by Jo Cox Civility Commission into the safety of elected members and meeting with Rt. Hon Jacqui Smith, Chair, with Cllr Marianne Overton
24	Meeting with Jim McMahon MP, Shadow Minister for Local Government
24	LGA Board
24	IDeA Board
25	Meeting with Joanna Killian, Incoming Chief Executive, LGA, with LGA Group Leaders
25	Councillors' Forum
25	Executive Advisory Board

### Meetings with organisations and individuals

<b>OCTOBER</b>	
23	Meeting with Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive, UK Health Security Agency

<b>30</b>	Meeting with Keith Fraser, Chair, and Adele Gritten, CEO, of Local Partnerships
<b>31</b>	Meeting with Donna Jones, Chair, and Phil Golding, CEO, of Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
<b>31</b>	Meeting with Sarah Newton, Chair, Health and Safety Executive
<b>31</b>	Meeting with John Pearce, President, Association of Directors of Children's Services
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	
<b>6</b>	Meeting with Lord Adebawale, Chair, NHS Confederation
<b>15</b>	Attended APCC-NPCC Partnership Summit 2023
<b>DECEMBER</b>	
<b>5</b>	Meeting with Lord Morse, Chair, and Josh Goodman, CEO, OFLOG
<b>6</b>	Meeting with Paul Nowak, President, Trades Union Congress
<b>11</b>	Meeting with Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair, Arts Council

### Events and speaking engagements

<b>NOVEMBER</b>	
<b>20</b>	Attended and addressed CCN Conference, Marlow
<b>DECEMBER</b>	
<b>14</b>	Introduced <i>Drive Forward's</i> Care Leavers webinar
<b>January</b>	
<b>9</b>	Attended and addressed LGA Finance Conference, London





## City Regions Board – Report from Cllr Satvir Kaur (Chair)

### Future of Cities

1. Building on the success of last year's Urban Summit, and the Future of Cities drinks reception at the LGA's conference, the Board has agreed to host a third Urban Summit in June 2024. Members have agreed that as we look to the next general election, the third urban summit will have a more focused agenda to give the Board and its partner Special Interest Groups a platform to engage key national decision makers and politicians, to amplify our offer: that, with the right policies, finances and space to deliver, cities can produce better outcomes, not just for urban areas, but for the whole country.

### Levelling Up

2. The NHS Confederation, through its Health Economic Partnerships work programme and ICS network, established a time-limited health and devolution working group. The aim of the group was to understand the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for ICS leaders, how this intersects with English devolution to date and the emerging devolution deals. The Board co-sponsored the group alongside the People and Places and Community Wellbeing Boards. Four meetings took place in April, June, July and September and officers from the LGA and NHS Confederation are finalising the report encapsulating the findings from the working group.

### Employment and skills

3. As we move towards a General Election in 2024, our aim is that a returning Government or new administration will adopt LGA's Work Local proposals for employment and skills devolution, which was jointly developed by the People and Places and City Regions Boards. The LGA has established a working group of officers from councils, devolved authorities and local government partner bodies to develop finer detail.
4. The LGA continues to support discussions between councils outside of devolution areas and the Department for Work and Pensions on the design of Universal Support, a new employment support programme to help people back into work, which is set to be rolled out in 2024. Discussions have been positive, with DWP set to grant fund councils to run this programme. It represents a step change in DWP's thinking on how employment support can be delivered with and through local government and we are working through a range of issues about how to operationalise this.
5. The LGA has continued to support the local government representative on the cross departmental Ministerial Green Jobs Delivery Group and have been taking a leading role in the Local Capacity and Capability sub-group, regularly seeking member input over the last year and engaging closely with partners. This has been an opportunity to put forward the case for a [Green Jobs framework](#), based

on the principles of the LGA's [Work Local model](#). The sub group will be putting forward suggested recommendations for the Government's Green Jobs Action Plan in the first quarter of 2024. Lead members of City Regions, People & Places and the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Boards provided further feedback on the recommendations in December 2023.

6. Councillor Robert Alden along with Councillor Louise McKinlay from the People and Places Board continue to support the work of the Youth Employment UK Youth Commission. The Commission aims to understand the impact of the Department for Education's decision to remove funding and support for some Level 2 Apprenticeships and for some Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications and to propose solutions that will 'allow all young people to flourish'. The Commission is due to produce a final report in January/February 2024 with policy recommendations.
7. To build on the City Regions and People and Places Boards' joint work to ensure economic inclusion, we have commissioned Pragmatix Advisory to examine how the transport system impacts people and places by limiting or enabling access to skills, training, and the labour market. The project will explore six to eight (coastal/rural/urban) places with different typologies to illustrate the impact of transport challenges and make a set of short-term and long-term policy recommendations.

## Growth funding

8. The Board, alongside the People and Places Board, has jointly commissioned Athey Consulting to carry out a piece of technical analysis of previous and existing growth funds, identify the benefits and challenges of current methodologies used and lessons learned, and explore an alternative future model of growth funding which provides certainty and flexibility for councils which can be used to influence the next or successor government in their preparation for successor growth funds.
9. The Board, alongside the People and Places Board, has also commissioned Henham Strategy to develop a series of action learning sets to provide an opportunity for local areas to work through the challenges and opportunities of integration, with the findings published for other areas to benefit too. The findings from this research will be used to support the LGA's lobbying of central government to provide further support to councils and combined authorities with LEP integration.
10. This builds on work carried out by Shared Intelligence between November 2022 and March 2023 to develop support for councils and combined authorities undertaking LEP integration and share good practice and learning through a series of workshops. Most of the research was conducted before the Chancellor said he was 'minded to' end funding to LEPs from April 2024 and for their functions to be delivered by local government.

11. The LGA also hosted a webinar attended by 196 people to share the learning from local government's leadership of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The webinar included presentations by East Riding of Yorkshire, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Forest of Dean and Cotswold district councils. It covered some of the challenges and opportunities the fund has brought, as well as the sharing of good practice.

### **Contact details**

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 0207 187 7384

Email: [rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk)



## Community Wellbeing Board – Report from Cllr David Fothergill (Chairman)

### Mental health, learning disabilities and unpaid carers

1. In October we submitted a response to the Cabinet Office's Disability Action Plan consultation.
2. In October 2023, I agreed the LGA publication 'Blue Badge application: top tips for people with disabilities not online'. This publication is in response to an Age UK report highlighting difficulties some older people have applying for Blue Badge Parking permits online. It includes case studies from three councils who offer alternative means of support to residents to apply for Blue Badges and some 'top tips' for other councils.
3. On 7 November Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz spoke at a Kings Fund event on the importance of collaboration between health and housing services.
4. On 10 November I responded to a Public Accounts Committee final report on supported housing calling highlighting the need for an appropriate level of new burdens funding to recognise the substantial impact the new legislation will have on councils.
5. On 10 November, [I responded to the Chief Medical Officer's annual report](#), "Health in an Ageing Society", highlighting the key role councils can play in helping to increase quality of life for older people.
6. On 21 November Cllr Joanne Harding attended the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Advisory Group to push for the continuation of local suicide prevention funding which is due to end in 2024.
7. On 12 January we sent [a letter to Minster Buchan](#) which I signed calling to protect homelessness services from being decommissioned by boosting and ring-fencing funding for supported housing.
8. On 15 January 2023, I attended the LGA Chairman's roundtable on 'Right Care, Right Person' (RCRP) the National Partnership Agreement. The roundtable included senior leaders from local authorities, police, health and the voluntary sector. The aim of the roundtable was to identify and share emerging issues around RCRP. Key actions were identified to take forward.
9. In January 2024, I agreed the publication of the LGA and Partners in Care and Health legal guide: 'Preparing for adulthood: Young people with a learning disability and autistic young people'. The LGA commissioned the guide to pull together in one place, relevant legislation and guidance to assist local council

staff working in this area including social workers and lawyers.

## Adult Social Care and Health

10. On 17 October I chaired the latest in our series of webinars on adult social care assurance. Alongside directors from the Care Quality Commission and the Department of Health and Social Care, I was delighted to welcome senior Members and officers from Lincolnshire and Suffolk County Councils, two of the five council pilot sites that tested the assurance process last year. The webinar enjoyed another big turnout and attendees had ample opportunity to pose their questions to speakers. The answers to a number of those questions have been published on our website here: <https://www.local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations/adult-social-care-assurance-learning-cqc-pilots-and-elected-0>
11. On 28 November, I chaired a panel discussion on the role and future of Integrated Care Partnerships at the second annual ICS conference. Sarah Pickup, Acting LGA Chief Executive, also contributed to a panel discussion on the importance of collaborative working at the conference.
12. I was delighted to co-chair the annual National Children and Adult Services Conference in Bournemouth in November, along with my colleague Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair of the Children and Young People Board. The conference took place over 3 days and – with 1000 attendees, over 40 sessions and a large exhibition – it offered a fantastic opportunity for attendees to come together to discuss and learn about the latest thinking and developments in the sector. Keynote speakers included Helen Whately MP, Minister of State for Social Care, Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Minister for Social Care and Amanda Pritchard from NHS England and the interactive workshop sessions demonstrated our commitment to ensuring people with lived experience of services were involved both as speakers and delegates.

## Public health

13. On 15 November 2023, I chaired a panel session at the annual UK Health Security Agency national conference in Leeds. The session, titled, “Knitting it together: making health protection work in neighbourhood, place and system” featured presentations from Dr Renu Bindra, Deputy Director of Clinical and Public Health Response, UKHSA, Robin Tuddenham, Chief Executive, Calderdale Council and Jennifer Connolly, Associate Director for Improving Population Health at West Yorkshire Combined Authority, followed by an audience Q&A. The session discussed the role of health protection in systems working and how we can make it the best it can possibly be.

## Press statements

14. The Board has made a number of media statements:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-ukhsa-hiv-survey>



Councillors' Forum

25 January 2024

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-care-workforce-pathway>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-urges-family-hub-extension>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/councils-warn-rise-synthetic-opioid-use>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-lancet-cancer-survival-study>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-smokefree-2030-consultation>

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## Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board – Report from Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair)

### Housing, Planning and Homelessness

#### Implementation of plan-making reforms

1. The LGA responded to the Government's [consultation on implementation of reforms to the plan-making system](#) which included proposals to introduce a 30-month timeframe for plan-preparation, digitisation and standardisation of plan-making and evidence, gateway assessments to check progress on plan-making and approaches to community engagement. We continue to work with DLUHC as they bring forward reforms to the planning system, as well as engaging with other sector stakeholders.

#### Coming Home: How local authorities and the Church of England can meet housing need.

2. The LGA jointly hosted a webinar with Church Housing on the practical steps the Church is taking following the [Archbishop's Commission on Housing, Church and Community](#), and how local authorities can engage and partner with the Church to meet local housing needs. More than 40 local authorities attended the webinar.

#### Council housebuilding

3. We continue to call for the Government to support councils to resume their historic role as major builders of affordable homes by implementing [a six-point plan](#) for social housing.
4. Councillor Rodwell wrote a [comment piece](#) for Inside Housing's 'Build Social' campaign, outlining our six point-plan which would support councils to properly resume their historic role as a major builder of affordable homes.
5. We have commissioned Pragmatix Advisory to undertake a research project to assess the economic, social and environmental benefits of 5-year local housing deals to support our six-point plan for housing.

#### Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) consultation on changes to its fees regime.

6. We responded to this consultation expressing our concern that there has been no consultation with the sector on the principle of having to pay an annual fee to the RSH to cover the cost of the regulation. We are also expressed concerns given our ongoing communication with the government about the financial pressures on Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs) that a unilateral decision has been made, that now is an appropriate time to move to 100 per cent full cost recovery, and in

doing so add more than £12.5 million in unanticipated costs to HRAs across the country every year.

### **Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) consultation on consumer standards.**

7. We responded to this consultation and were broadly supportive of the four revised consumer standards and the accompanying Code of Practice, and that these set out the right expectations of landlords. We urged the Regulator to commit to a review of the standards and how they are being proactively regulated after a specified period post-implementation - with processes, the standards and the Code of Practice being tweaked as needed.

### **Planning fees**

8. Following long-standing calls from the LGA, legislative amendments to increase planning application fees took effect on 6 December 2023. Application fees have increased by 25 per cent across the board, rising to 35 per cent for major schemes.

### **Renters Reform Bill**

9. We have provided a briefing for the Committee Stage welcoming the long-awaited Bill, but highlighting our concerns about the delay in ending Section 21 'no fault' eviction notices. We continue to engage with stakeholders and government as the Bill progresses. Mayor Dennett (Salford City Council) gave oral evidence to the Renters Reform Bill Committee on 14 November.

### **The Criminal Justice Bill**

10. We have highlighted our concerns about the measure related to rough sleeping, particularly the risks that councils will be expected to enforce measures that criminalise rough sleeping and that, instead, there should be a prevention-first approach. Cllr Sue Wooley gave oral evidence to the Criminal Justice Bill Committee on 14 December.

### **Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel: Prevention sub-group**

11. As a member of the Government's Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel, set up to scrutinise its '[Ending Rough Sleeping for Good Strategy](#)', the LGA and St Basils he led a sub-group on over summer to specifically scrutinise progress and gaps on rough sleeping prevention. This as in addition to two other sub-groups focussing on intervention and recovery, and transparent and joined up systems. All sub-groups subsequently developed reports and these are published on the LGA's website.

## Local Housing Allowance Rates

12. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates govern the maximum amount of Housing Benefit that low-income tenants of private landlords can receive. In the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced that the private sector Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate would be restored to the 30th percentile of market rents in April 2024 before being re-frozen in April 2025, at a cost of £1.2 billion. However, The LHA rate for Temporary Accommodation (TA) is set separately from the rate in the PRS and has been frozen since 2011. This has meant that councils have seen an ever-widening gap in the subsidy that they receive from the DWP. This was not addressed in the Autumn Statement. We are procuring research to review councils' TA subsidy loss for 2022/23 (and mid-year estimates for 2023/24) and compare this to the likely impact of allowing the TA rate to rise in line with rents.

## Streamlined Asylum Processing

13. The Home Office previously updated its processes for asylum support cessations. Previously, this included sending an application decision followed by a notification to discontinue support in 28 days to the refugee. The new process combines the application decision and discontinuation of support notices, resulting in shorter eviction and support timeframes. We lobbied hard for the Home Office to maximise notice and ensure wider support is available to mitigate homelessness and other risks and they have subsequently reverted back to the 28 day notice.

## Rural homelessness

14. The LGA has worked with English Rural to run a series of workshops throughout May, July and October with a small selection of rural councils to determine practice needed to develop effective action in rural communities. We have developed this into a report which is due for publication on 29 January.

## Empty Homes

15. The LGA has worked in partnership with the Empty Homes Network on a research project exploring the role that councils can play in encouraging more homes to be proactively brought back into use. A [report](#) was published in November 2023.

## Transport Accessibility

16. On 22 November Cllr Linda Taylor gave oral evidence to the [Transport Committee inquiry on Accessible Transport](#). A variety of legal obligations to ensure accessibility apply to transport operators and local licensing authorities

across different modes of transport - the Transport Committee is conducting an inquiry into these legal obligations and whether they are being met.

17. Cllr Taylor's evidence included issues in relation to pavement clutter and pavement parking, reiterating the LGA's support for banning pavement parking. The challenges facing home-to school transport were also discussed, including the deficit and the exemptions from PSVAR which expire in 2026, as well the inability for councils to enforce against taxi's registered in other areas but operating in their area.

### Street works - fines and lane rental surplus funds

18. The DfT have launched a [consultation](#) on a series of reforms to street works regulations, which include:
- 18.1. requiring at least 50 per cent of any surplus lane rental funds to be spent on repairing potholes.
  - 18.2. raising the level of fixed penalty notices that can be issued for 5 street works offences.
  - 18.3. allowing overrun charges to apply at weekends and bank holidays.
19. The LGA intends to respond. The changes should help strengthen councils' ability to deal with street works and deter poor practice and delays. However, we will seek views as to whether further action could be helpful, for example if the Government could remove the requirement for Secretary of State approval for the setting up of such schemes. Councils are encouraged to respond to the consultation and share their submissions with the LGA with either Kamal Panchal [kamal.panchal@local.gov.uk](mailto:kamal.panchal@local.gov.uk) or Simon Jeffrey [simon.jeffrey@local.gov.uk](mailto:simon.jeffrey@local.gov.uk).

### Highways maintenance allocation

20. On 4 October 2023, the government announced £8.3 billion of additional highways maintenance funding over the period 2023 to 2024 and the next 10 years for local road resurfacing and wider maintenance activity on the local highway network. This consists of:
- 20.1. £3.3 billion for local authorities (LAs) in the North West, North East, and Yorkshire and the Humber
  - 20.2. £2.2 billion for LAs in the West Midlands and East Midlands
  - 20.3. £2.8 billion for LAs in the East of England, South East, South West and London.
21. The DfT have now confirmed and [published](#) the funding levels for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, and the indicative minimum additional funding allocations between 2023 to 2024 and 2033 to 2034 inclusive. This new money is additional to the existing [Highways Maintenance Block \(HMB\) and Pothole Fund](#). At

England level, the additional funding is £150 million for the 23/24 and £150 million for 24/25. The minimum additional overall uplift between 2024-25 and 2033-34 will be £6.9 billion, and £1.245 billion is to be allocated at a future date. The LGA have consistently called for a greater funding to help tackle the £14 billion backlog of road repairs and that future funding should come with long-term year-on-year certainty to help councils prioritise long-term preventative improvements, rather than more expensive reactive pot-hole repairs.

## Climate Change and Energy

### Local Net Zero Forum

22. The second ministerial level Local Net Zero Forum meeting was held on 21 November with Lord Callanan representing government. LGA member reps welcomed the progression to date whilst making it clear that the work of the forum was far from completed and now needed to enter a period of acceleration.

### Energy Security and Net Zero Committee

23. Cllr Paula Widdowson gave evidence on behalf of the LGA Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board at their **heating our homes inquiry**. Cllr Widdowson delivered the LGA lines on Local Climate Action being more cost effective than national action. [Parliamentlive.tv - Energy Security and Net Zero Committee](https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Programme.aspx?ProgrammeID=127139)

### COP position statement

24. Cllr Darren Rodwell sent a letter to the President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) partially endorsing CEMR position statement ahead of COP28.

### Heat Networks Pricing Consultation

25. On 27 October the LGA submitted evidence to governments Heat networks pricing consultation <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/heat-networks-regulation-consumer-protection>.

### Renewable Energy Good Practice webinar

26. On 21 November the LGA hosted a webinar with Local Partnerships and Net Zero Go to present the updated version of the "[Renewable Energy Good Practice Guidance](#)" originally published in September 2020 and highlight how Net Zero Go can support councils implementing renewable energy and net zero programmes. [Presentations are available to view online.](#)

## Back Local Climate Action

27. On 24 November, the LGA along with DCN, CCN and London Councils [wrote to Claire Coutinho MP](#), and hosted a parliamentary event to promote our Back Local Climate Action campaign. The event was well attended with at least eleven MP's and Peers attending and discussing with members and officers why local climate action can achieve net zero at half the cost of national action and deliver three times the financial returns and wider benefits.

## Opinion Poll

28. New YouGov polling commissioned by the LGA shows that just 5 per cent of the public feel prepared for the impacts of climate change. Polling also showed that the public trust their council the most to lead the effort to prepare for the impacts. Also found 63 per cent are worried about climate change, with storms, flooding, and heatwaves being the top 3 impacts.

## Solar taskforce subgroups

29. Officers have been representing member councils on the Solar Taskforce Subgroups for Rooftop Solar and Communications. Through the communications subgroup, Solar Energy UK (SEUK) have been preparing guidance on community benefits and engagement for ground mounted solar farms that are increasingly exceeding 50GW and being considered Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP).

## Waste

30. Defra set the next steps for household waste and recycling policy under a new name of "simpler recycling" in October. This confirmed that councils will have local flexibility in the design of collection systems, a change that the LGA has long argued for. The LGA responded to two consultations that followed the announcement, asking for clarity on the funding and implementation plan for the challenging dates set out by Defra including the start of mandatory weekly food waste collections from 1 April 2026.

31. Regulations came into force on 31 December 2023 removing council's power to charge for certain types of "DIY" type waste such at household waste and recycling centres. It is disappointing that government decided to waive the requirement to cover any financial loss to councils through the new burdens funding regime.

32. Waste and recycling services face further changes and the LGA is working closely with Defra and the waste officer networks to understand the impact of the new packaging extended producer responsibility scheme and the proposal for

waste incineration to pay for carbon emission through the national carbon trading scheme.

33. The LGA has commissioned work through SLR to look at current practice on commercial waste. The less waste = better business project will look at the opportunity to reduce the environmental impact of waste from businesses, and learning from councils on how waste services to businesses can be financially sustainable.

## Environment

34. Government has confirmed that they are not putting forward a legislative solution to the challenge of nutrient neutrality. The first tranche of the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund has been allocated to lead local planning authorities (£57 million) and DLUHC is starting conversations with affected catchment areas about the next tranche of funding.
35. The implementation of biodiversity net gain is moving forward, following a delay to the expected go live date of November 2023. Defra and DLUHC published draft biodiversity net gain guidance and regulation at the end of November and implementation for large sites is expected in late January or early February, with the exact date depending on the parliamentary timetable for signing of the statutory instrument. Implementation for small sites is still expected in April. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is providing support to local authorities including a practitioner network of 800 local authority officers. The LGA is working with PAS and the Future Homes Hub to advise Defra and DLUHC on implementation, including clarity on new burden funding for councils and support on gaps in ecological expertise.

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25 January 2024

## People and Places Board – Report from Cllr Martin Tett (Chair)

### Digital

1. The Board has continued to support councils with the digital switchover. Following publication of the [digital switch readiness survey](#) to understand councils' position on awareness, planning and implementation, the [digital switchover hub](#) has been updated in collaboration with key partners and social media assets and the leaflet contained within the [communications toolkit](#) have been revised incorporating feedback from councils.
2. The Board commissioned a survey to better understand how the 2G/3G switch off might impact the sector, what services will be most affected and levels of awareness. This information will better help the Board understand how councils can be supported throughout the process to inform its work lobbying Government and supporting the sector with digital connectivity and inclusion. The survey closed in September and the results have been published on the [digital switchover hub](#). A [press release](#) highlighting councils' concerns was [covered by the FT](#).
3. Cllr Mark Hawthorne met with Simon Fell MP, the UK's first Rural Connectivity Champion, on 7 August to welcome him to the role. Following this meeting, Simon Fell has been invited to attend the next People and Places Board to discuss how the Board can work with Government to improve connectivity in rural areas.

### Levelling up

4. The NHS Confederation, through its Health Economic Partnerships work programme and ICS network, established a time-limited health and devolution working group. The aim of the group was to understand the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for ICS leaders, how this intersects with English devolution to date and the emerging devolution deals. The Board co-sponsored the group alongside the City Regions and Community Wellbeing Boards. Four meetings took place in April, June, July and September and officers from the LGA and NHS Confederation are finalising the report encapsulating the findings from the working group.

### Employment and skills

5. As we move towards a General Election in 2024, our aim is that a returning Government or new administration will adopt LGA's Work Local proposals for employment and skills devolution, which was jointly developed by the People and Places and City Regions Boards. The LGA has established a working group of officers from councils, devolved authorities and local government partner bodies to develop finer detail.

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6. On 8 December, Cllr Amanda Serjeant (Board Vice Chair) represented the LGA at roundtable discussion of Barnsley Council's Pathways to Work [Commission](#). Chaired by the Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP, it is looking at local and national approaches to addressing unemployment and economic inactivity. The LGA gave evidence about Work Local and our [recent commissioned analysis](#) about local and national support to help people into work.
7. The LGA continues to support discussions between councils outside of devolution areas and the Department for Work and Pensions on the design of Universal Support, a new employment support programme to help people back into work, which is set to be rolled out in 2024. Discussions have been positive, with DWP set to grant fund councils to run this programme. It represents a step change in DWP's thinking on how employment support can be delivered with and through local government and we are working through a range of issues about how to operationalise this.
8. The LGA has continued to support the local government representative on the cross departmental Ministerial Green Jobs Delivery Group and have been taking a leading role in the Local Capacity and Capability sub-group, regularly seeking member input over the last year and engaging closely with partners. This has been an opportunity to put forward the case for a [Green Jobs framework](#), based on the principles of the LGA's [Work Local model](#). The sub group will be putting forward suggested recommendations for the Government's Green Jobs Action Plan in the first quarter of 2024. Lead members of City Regions, People & Places and the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Boards have provided further feedback on the recommendations in December 2023.
9. Councillor Louise McKinlay along with Councillor Robert Alden from the City Regions Board continue to support the work of the Youth Employment UK Youth Commission. The Commission aims to understand the impact of the Department for Education's decision to remove funding and support for some Level 2 Apprenticeships and for some Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications and to propose solutions that will 'allow all young people to flourish'. The Commission is due to produce a final report in January/February 2024 with policy recommendations.
10. To build on the People and Places and City Regions Boards' joint work to ensure economic inclusion, we have commissioned Pragmatix Advisory to examine how the transport system impacts people and places by limiting or enabling access to skills, training, and the labour market. The project will explore six to eight (coastal/rural/urban) places with different typologies to illustrate the impact of transport challenges and make a set of short-term and long-term policy recommendations.

## Growth funding

11. The Board, alongside the City Regions Board, has jointly commissioned Athey Consulting to carry out a piece of technical analysis of previous and existing

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growth funds, identify the benefits and challenges of current methodologies used and lessons learned, and explore an alternative future model of growth funding which provides certainty and flexibility for councils which can be used to influence the next or successor government in their preparation for successor growth funds.

12. The Board, alongside the City Regions Board, has also commissioned Henham Strategy to develop a series of action learning sets to provide an opportunity for local areas to work through the challenges and opportunities of LEP integration, with the findings published for other areas to benefit too. The findings from this research will be used to support the LGA's lobbying of central government to provide further support to councils and combined authorities with LEP integration.
13. This builds on work carried out by Shared Intelligence between November 2022 and March 2023 to develop support for councils and combined authorities undertaking LEP integration and share good practice and learning through a series of workshops. Most of the research was conducted before the Chancellor said he was 'minded to' end funding to LEPs from April 2024 and for their functions to be delivered by local government.
14. Cllr Martin Tett, Chairman of the People & Places Board hosted a webinar, attended by 196 people, to share the learning from local government's leadership of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Presentations were delivered by East Riding of Yorkshire, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Forest of Dean and Cotswold district councils. The webinar covered some of the challenges and opportunities the fund has brought, as well as the sharing of good practice.



## Children and Young People Board – Report from Cllr Louise Gittins (Chair)

### Children's social care

1. I have written to the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education, alongside colleagues in Solace and the Association of Directors of Children's Services, to highlight our significant concerns around the availability and escalating costs of placements for children in care.
2. This letter was followed by the results of the LGA's survey into [high cost placements for children in care](#), which showed a sharp rise in the number of placements costing at least £10,000 per week. Our findings were reported on the Today programme and generated significant discussion in the sector. We are now working with the Government on options to address the challenge in the short and medium term.
3. On 4 October, CYP Board Deputy Chair Councillor Jon Hubbard chaired a webinar for councillors on supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, which was well attended by councillors from across the country.
4. On 25 October we launched the LGA's campaign to improve support for care leavers, [#StepAhead](#) and published a letter in the Daily Express calling on councils and small businesses to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant.
5. On the same day, I attended a roundtable chaired by Johnny Mercer MP, the cross-government minister for care leavers. I was delighted to be joined by a care leaver from my own authority who was able to share her views on what good support looks like.
6. At the end of October we published the latest update to our work on profit-making and financial risk among the largest independent providers of children's social care placements. This received exclusive coverage in the Observer and continues to be well-used by councils as we work to address the challenges in the 'market'.
7. Ahead of the Autumn Statement in November, we organised a coalition of 29 charities and campaigners to [call on the Chancellor](#) to improve funding for children's social care.
8. In November we submitted a response to the Government's second consultation on the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, highlighting significant concerns with the impact assessment for the policy and a lack of support for victims and survivors.

9. We have submitted evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into children's social care.

## Mental health

10. We [shared a briefing](#) in advance of the Schools (Mental Health Professionals) Bill, welcoming the focus on the area, supporting our long standing call for counsellors in all state-funded secondary schools. We also highlighted the need for community services outside of the school for children to get the range of support that they need. We also [briefed on a debate](#) on mental health support for children and young people in the House of Lords.
11. Our series of think pieces on children's mental health came to an end, [I wrote a final reflection](#) on behalf of the board, thanking contributors, including the Children's Minister for sharing their thoughts and insight into the challenges and solutions to improve children's mental health.

## Education

12. We submitted a response to NAO's inquiry into supporting the attainment of disadvantaged children in educational settings. We outlined the need for a cross-government child centred strategy, backed by concerted action, to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people across all services.

## Early years

13. We [submitted a briefing](#) in advance of a debate on the importance of good quality early years education provision and environments since the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting recent LGA research and highlighting concerns from councils on the challenges facing them in light of the expansion of entitlements.
14. We published a [report into wraparound childcare provision](#), undertaken by Coram Family and Childcare. The report highlights good practice with some councils but the challenges that some areas are seeing with insufficient capacity to focus on this area.

## Youth Justice

15. We submitted a response to the HMIP consultation on inspection of youth justice services, welcoming the move to a focus on outcomes rather than process and highlighting the need for a child-focused inspection system.
16. I chaired a webinar on reducing youth violence. Speakers included the Youth Endowment Fund, colleagues from Greenwich Council and Your Choice to

explore evidence-based practice that makes a difference to the lives of children and young people.

## National Children and Adult Services Conference

17. The National Children and Adult Services Conference took place in Bournemouth from the 29 November to the 1 December. Children and Young People Board lead members and I chaired a number of sessions, including those featuring the Minister and shadow Minister for Children and Families. Early years, education, special educational needs and children's social care were also discussed in detail across the three days.

## Board meeting

18. I chaired an additional meeting of the Children and Young People Board on the 13 December that focussed on the development of the Local Government white paper. Comments covered topics including children's social care, education and SEND and there was agreement that a solutions-focussed approach was necessary that would present councils as equal partners to central government.

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## Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – Report from Cllr Liz Green (Chair)

### Culture

1. Cllr Liz Green met with the Showmen's Guild on the 7 November 2023, to discuss the contribution of funfairs to local areas and their relationship with councils.
2. She met with Baroness Scott of Needham Park in her role as a non-executive member of the Board of The National Archives (TNA) on the 16 January 2024, to discuss the partnership between the LGA and TNA and support for local public archive services.
3. In January 2024, she contributed [a think piece to an LGA series of articles](#), exploring how culture and leisure can support children's mental health.
4. Cllr Julie Jones-Evans attended the launch of the Government response to Baroness Sanderson's Independent Review of Library Services.

### Sport

5. On 24 October 2024 Cllr Green gave oral evidence at the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on Women's sport, giving evidence on the financial pressures facing the service and examples of good practice where councils are engaging women and girls to engage in activity and tackle inequalities.
6. Cllr Green gave the keynote speech at the Why Sports annual conference on 25 October 2023. It focused on local government's contribution to unlocking the potential of the sport and leisure sector to support wider policy agendas for reducing the burden on the NHS and social care, getting more people active and creating a fit and healthy workforce, place shaping and economic development.
7. Cllr Green attended the second meeting of the National Physical Activity Taskforce on 12 December 2023, its role is to provide oversight and track progress made on the Government's new sport strategy. The taskforce discussed the latest Children and Young People's Active Survey results. The latest data demonstrates activity levels remain stable but there has not been an increase in activity levels compared to last year. More Black and Asian children and young people are inactive and the gap has widened over the past 5 years.
8. Cllr Peter Golds attended a UKactive health summit, discussing how to pivot leisure services towards a wellbeing service, reducing the pressure on social care and the NHS.



Councillors' Forum

25 January 2024

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## Economy and Resources Board – Report from Cllr Pete Marland (Chair)

### Introduction

1. This report provides a summary of work by the LGA Economy and Resources Board since the last Councillors' Forum on 19 October 2023.

### Local Government Finance

#### Autumn Statement November 2023

2. Lead members of the Economy and Resources Board (ERB), alongside the Chair and Group Leaders, approved the [LGA's submission to the Autumn Statement](#). This included an updated estimate of our funding gap analysis alongside an analysis of the challenges facing council finances and services. The submission also included summaries of the issues in children's services, adult social care, housing and homelessness and net zero. The submission formed the basis for a substantial programme of campaigning and briefing involving news and social media alongside engagement with Parliamentarians and senior civil servants.
3. On the day of the Autumn Statement the LGA produced an [on the day briefing](#) which was sent to council leaders, chief executives, chief finance officers and parliamentarians. The LGA also issued a [press release](#) in response to the Autumn Statement.

#### Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25

4. The 2024/25 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 18 December 2023. We published an [on the day briefing](#) highlighting key information from the settlement, and issued a [press release](#). We [responded](#) to the settlement consultation by the 15 January deadline. The response, which warns of the serious challenges councils face to set balanced budgets next year, was cleared by the Chairman, Group Leaders and ERB lead members.
5. Along with other LGA lead members, I attended a meeting with local government minister, Simon Hoare, to discuss the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, as part of the consultation process ahead of the announcement of the Final Settlement.
6. Before the Settlement, we sent out a rapid [temperature check](#) to all council leaders and chief executives to help us strengthen our campaigning activities

ahead of the announcement. The results showed that one in five council leaders and chief executives in England think it is very or fairly likely they will receive a Section 114 report this year or next. Half of respondents were not confident they will have enough funding to fulfil their legal duties next year (2024/25). This includes the delivery of statutory services.

7. There was also extensive social media activity. For example a [video from myself](#) on Twitter and LinkedIn highlighting the financial challenges, according to our survey, facing councils following the Autumn Statement (23k+ video views).

## 2023 Local Government Finance Conference

8. On 9 January I chaired the [LGA Local Government Finance Conference](#) at Smith Square. Speakers, at the sold-out event, included Simon Hoare MP, Minister for Local Government; Jim McMahon MP, Shadow Minister for Local Government and Devolution; and Cllr Shaun Davies, the Chair of the LGA as well as senior officers from the sector, Government officials and economists from the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

## Business Rates

9. The [Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023](#) became law on 26 October. The Act implements revaluation once every three years, new duties for ratepayers and new mandatory reliefs including an Improvement Relief. It also makes some changes to business rates administration including giving ministers powers to set the standard and the small business rates multipliers separately. The LGA briefed for the various stages of the Bill in both Houses of Parliament. The LGA also [replied](#) to a DLUHC consultation on [Technical adjustments to the Business Rates Retention System](#) arising from the Act.
10. The Government has not yet responded to the [DLUHC consultation on business rates avoidance and evasion](#) which closed on 30 September 2023. The [LGA response](#) welcomed the consultation and the methods proposed to tighten up on avoidance including giving billing authorities more discretion on reliefs, provided that authorities do not lose resources through business rates reliefs being made discretionary rather than mandatory.

## Council Tax

11. [The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#), which became law on 26 October changes the law on council tax premiums for empty homes, and introduces council tax premiums for second homes. The time before councils can charge council tax premiums for empty homes will be cut from two years to one year from 1 April 2024. As for second homes, the Act will permit a council tax premium of up to 100 per cent, but because of the need to give a full financial

year's notice, the earliest this can be applied is the financial year beginning 1 April 2025. A response to the DLUHC consultation on [exemptions for the empty and second homes council tax premium](#) is awaited. As reported to your last meeting, the LGA's [response](#) says that the Government needs to assure itself that it has adequately taken account of the sector's views on whether new regulations are necessary, or whether expanding the [existing guidance on empty homes](#) is sufficient.

12. On 27 October, DLUHC published its [response](#) to the consultation on the way houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are valued for council tax purposes and laid the necessary [regulations](#) before Parliament. Although the response acknowledged the point [made by the LGA](#) that the Government should consider how to ensure that HMOs make a fair contribution to the cost of local services before going ahead with changes, the Government still resolved to go ahead with plans to ensure that all HMOs are valued as a single property. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has written to local authority HMO licensing departments and revenue and benefit managers asking for information about licensed HMOs.

### Local Accounts and Audit

13. We continued discussions with DLUHC, Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and others on actions to be taken in response to the ongoing crisis in local audit. A consultation on proposals that was expected to be issued in October / November is now expected to be issued in late January or February. At our Finance conference in January, the Minister announced that this will include a proposed back stop date of 30 September 2024 for all financial years up to and including 2022/23. We continue to call on the Government to publish a formal timetable outlining the steps to be taken and when, and the time by which it expects to restore timely audited accounts.

### Capital and Investments

14. We will be responding to consultations on [new capital flexibilities](#) and [changes to statutory guidance and regulation for Minimum Revenue Provision](#), which were issued in December.

### Counter Fraud

15. We responded to a consultation from the Cabinet Office on reinstating adult social care data matching into the National Fraud Initiative (NFI). This data matching had to be withdrawn in 2020 following legal concerns which the Cabinet Office has now overcome. In our [response](#), which was cleared jointly by lead members of the Economy and Resources Board and lead members of the Community Wellbeing Board, we supported the reinstatement of matching this

data in the NFI but we also called for wider and earlier data sharing to support prevention of fraud and error earlier in the system.

16. In November, the Vice Chair of the Board made a key note speech to the conference of [Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally](#).

## Local government services ('Green Book') pay 2023-24

17. Agreement was reached on 1 November on the 2023-24 pay award for local government services ('Green Book') for an increase of £1,925 on all pay points and 3.88 per cent on all locally determined pay points above the top of the national pay spine.
18. UNISON's and GMB's acceptance of the offer met the requirement for a majority on the Trade Union Side to be in favour, thereby allowing a formal collective agreement to be reached. For a third consecutive year, Unite refused to have its details included in the NJC pay agreement circular (although they have now agreed the craft award – see below).
19. The deal achieves a bottom rate of pay of £11.59 with effect from 1 April 2023 (which equates to a pay increase of 9.42 per cent for employees on the bottom pay point 2). This means an employee on the bottom pay point in April 2021 (then earning £18,333) has received an increase in their pay of £4,033 (22.0 per cent) over the two years to April 2023. For an employee at the mid-point of the pay spine (pay point 22, earning £27,514 in April 2021), their pay has increased over the same period by £3,850 (13.99 per cent).

## The National Living Wage (NLW)

20. Since its introduction in 2014, the NLW has proven to be a challenge because of its constant close proximity to the bottom end of the national pay spine, which is used by most councils and schools and by a significant number of organisations in the third sector.
21. From the outset, the National Employers established a principle that local government should not be a minimum wage employer. Therefore, the lowest rate of pay in local government has always been higher than the NLW, as shown in this table:



22. In his Autumn Statement on 22 November, the Chancellor announced the NLW would increase by 9.80 per cent to £11.44 from 1 April 2024.
23. The NLW is currently £10.42 and the bottom NJC hourly rate is £11.59, providing clear headroom of £1.17. However, the gap will narrow to just 15p from 1 April next year for the period until the 2024 pay deal is agreed, as shown in the table above.
24. The Low Pay Commission's (LPC) forecast in March 2023 was for an upper estimate of the rate for April 2024 of £11.43 (which was 8p higher than November 2022's top-end forecast of £11.35).
25. As the 2024 NLW rate achieves the government's policy for it to reach 66 per cent of average earnings by 2024, the government has issued the LPC with a second remit asking for evidence to inform future minimum wage policy, beyond 2024. LPC has submitted its report to government and awaits its response.

### JNC Craftworkers ('Red Book')

26. Agreement between the National Employers and the trade union side (Unite and GMB) was reached on 16 November on the 2023-24 pay award for local government craft workers ('Red Book') for an increase of £1,925 on all pay points.

#### JNC Chief Officers

27. Agreement was reached on the 2023 pay award of 3.50 per cent on 5 May 2023.

### JNC Chief Executives

28. Agreement was reached on the 2023 pay award of 3.50 per cent on 1 November 2023.

### Youth and Community Workers

29. Agreement was reached on the 2023 pay award of a £1,925 increase on 7 December 2023.

### Soulbury

30. Agreement was reached on the 2022 pay award of a £1,925 increase and the 2023 pay award of 4.0 per cent on 20 December 2023.

### Minimum service levels

31. On 20 October, the Secretary of State for Education announced the government's commitment to introduce minimum service levels (MSLs) in schools and colleges, either by voluntary agreement with unions or via a regulatory approach, as soon as practicable. The government has previously published consultations on MSL regulations for ambulance services, hospital services, fire and rescue services, passenger rail and border security.
32. On 28 November, DfE published a consultation on its proposed Regulations. The LGA and National Employers are currently forming the response to this consultation that will be considered by the Economy and Resources Board ahead of the deadline at the end of January,
33. The Secretary of State's preference was to proceed by agreement and to issue guidance to manage strike action rather than pursue statutory MSLs. However, agreement was deemed unreachable with the teaching and / or non-teaching unions (there are many on-the-record statements and union conference motions reflecting their opposition to the entire Act.
34. The LGA and other employer representatives for schools and colleges have met with DfE officials on several occasions. DfE does not at this stage seem to have answers for some key questions raised by employers on how this policy is to be implemented. MSLs could be bureaucratically very onerous at times when schools are preparing for industrial action and expose employers to increased legal risks. There is uncertainty over the consequences for individual employers (in light of their statutory duties and obligations) if they decide not to utilise the provisions of this legislation.



## Trade Union Act 2016: Check Off Arrangements in the Public Sector

35. The Trade Union Act 2016 introduced powers to restrict the use of check off arrangements in “relevant public sector employer[s]” but these have not yet been brought into force. The provisions are now expected to take effect on 9 May 2024, following implementation of the Trade Union (Deduction of Union Subscriptions from Wages in the Public Sector) Regulations 2023, which have been published in draft form and specify the employers the restrictions will apply to. However, this requires the approval of both houses of parliament. Similar draft regulations were laid in 2017 and whilst there was some opposition these were not passed ostensibly because of a lack of parliamentary time.
36. The new restriction is that public sector employers will only be able to deduct trade union subscriptions from its workers’ wages via a check-off arrangement where:
- the workers have the option to pay their subscription by other means; and
  - the union makes reasonable payments to the employer which are “substantially equivalent to the total cost to public funds of making the deductions”.
37. As well as setting out when the restriction will take effect, the draft Regulations list the “relevant public sector employer[s]” to whom the restrictions will apply. As anticipated that extensive list includes local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, governing bodies of local authority-maintained schools and academy schools.
38. The statutory provisions do not specify charges in the sense that there is no minimum or maximum level of fees, as the Act requires that arrangements have been made for the union to make reasonable payments to the employer in respect of them making the deductions and that this means the employer is satisfied that the total amount of the payments is substantially equivalent to the total cost to public funds of making the deductions. An employer would be required to cease making deductions if agreement on reasonable payments cannot be reached. Cabinet Office has produced guidance to assist employers and trade unions in understanding their obligations under the legislation.
39. We anticipate that many authorities will have entered discussions about these proposed changes with their trade unions some time ago following the introduction of the Trade Union Act 2016, with a view to seeing if check off arrangements can continue after the restrictions come into force. As the proposals were not enacted at the time it may be that they will need further consideration at this stage. We will keep authorities updated if there are any changes in the final regulations as they pass through Parliament.

40. Consultation on the Acas draft Code of Practice on handling requests for a predictable working pattern
41. The Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 18 September 2023. It enacted a Government commitment to introduce a right for workers to request a predictable working pattern following the Taylor Review in 2017 and the publication of the Good Work Plan. The Government has announced that the changes are expected to come into force approximately a year after the Act was passed i.e. Autumn 2024.
42. The Act will amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to give workers and agency workers the right to request a more predictable work pattern where there is a lack of predictability as regards any part of their work pattern (fixed-term contracts of 12 months or less are presumed to lack predictability which would allow a worker to request an extension or removal of the fixed-term nature of the contract). There will be a minimum service requirement to access the right which is expected to be 26 weeks. This will be specified in regulations. Two applications would be allowed in a 12-month period and applications may be rejected on grounds specified in the Act which are: the burden of additional costs; detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand; detrimental impact on the recruitment of staff; detrimental impact on other aspects of the employer's business (or, in the case of a request by an agency worker, the agency or hirer's business); insufficiency of work during the periods the worker (or agency worker) proposes to work; planned structural changes and such other grounds as the Secretary of State may specify by regulations. Employers will have to respond within one month of the request being made.
43. Acas is consulting on a draft statutory Code of Practice on handling requests for a predictable working pattern to accompany the legislation. The Code will not of itself confer any legal rights and obligations. However, employment tribunals will take the Code into account when considering relevant cases. The Workforce Team responded to the consultation on 10 January 2024.

## Apprenticeships

### Pooled PAYE – Funding Rules Changes Announced

44. Members will recall that at the July meeting they granted approval for the LGA to lobby government to make a change to the apprenticeship funding rules to help solve the long-standing problem whereby employers that were part of a Pooled PAYE scheme run by a local authority (mainly, but not exclusively, Voluntary Aided Schools and Faith Schools) were prevented from accessing apprenticeships funding due to technicalities of how the system of accessing apprenticeship funding operates.

45. Officers met with DfE officials throughout the summer and early autumn to discuss this change and provided government with the results of a survey of local authorities affected that laid bare the scale of the problem.
46. Our lobbying was successful and DfE announced on 31 October 2023 that the apprenticeship funding rules were being changed to allow councils to use some of their own unspent levy funds to pay for apprenticeships in the affected employers, thus restoring their ability to access some form of apprenticeship funding. This is a significant success and should help to unblock much of the problem. LGA officers have already held group sessions and one-to-one meetings with many of the affected councils to explain how the new rules will work and discuss how councils can employ them in practice. Further meetings with councils will take place in January.

### **LGA Submission to DfE on Further Apprenticeship Funding Rule Changes**

47. Following our successful lobbying on Pooled PAYE, DfE officials invited the LGA to submit some ideas for additional changes that could be made to the apprenticeship funding rules in the 2024-25 academic year. We used this submission as another opportunity to call for the introduction of flexibilities in how the levy funds can be spent, as well as some more practical ways certain elements of the rules could be amended to be more helpful for councils and their apprentices, including on fees, functional skills and changes to incentive payments.

### **DfE Child and Family Social Worker Agency Workforce Consultation**

48. The LGA responded to the DfE Child and Family Social Worker Agency Workforce consultation. The consultation sought views on national agency pay caps, the procurement of agency workers, post graduate experience thresholds, the provision of references for social workers, notice periods and the collection of data. The response from DfE was published in October and took on board the views of the LGA, other organisations and individuals. We are now taking part in further discussions as part of a project group with DfE to Implement the resulting actions.

### **National Social Work Healthcheck**

49. The LGA has received funding from Government to run the 2024-25 Healthcheck for social workers. To date, 128 councils have opted in and will receive a bespoke report when the survey closes, which will help them to identify ways in

which to create the right environment to retain, develop and recruit social workers.

## McCloud Update

50. The LGA Pensions Team continues to support councils who are LGPS administering authorities to implement McCloud remedy, the legislation for which became effective from 1 October 2023. The team has recently published the first part of a guide for administrators, as well as template letters and a member factsheet. This complements updates to the LGPS member website which include videos and easy to understand materials about McCloud remedy.

## Pensions Dashboard

51. DWP has updated the regulations around the expected date that pension schemes will be ready for their members to access their data through the pensions dashboard. The latest connection date is now 31 October 2026, but we expect the LGPS connection date to be earlier than this, and it will be included in statutory guidance. The LGA pensions team has published a draft dashboards connection guide for LGPS administering authorities.

## Creating effective organisation structures (DMA approach)

52. We are continuing to work with councils to lead organisational design reviews using the DMA methodology. We have worked with several councils this year leading both whole council or directorate DMA reviews. Over the last six months the workforce team has supported eleven councils including desktop reviews, provision of training or whole DMA reviews.

## Emergenetics

53. Following the successful pilot, we have been working with councils to deliver Emergenetics Development Sessions aimed at enhancing communication and collaboration. These tailored sessions have been delivered to Councillors, Senior Management and individual teams. Colleagues understand their thinking and behavioural preferences and develop strategies for more effective communication.

## Skills Hubs

54. The skills shortages programme has been successfully launched, with 63 councils already taking part. The skills partnership lead councils have met, officially launched the programme of work, set expectations and are starting to develop plans. The Skills Partnership Hubs will be meeting monthly and working collaboratively with other work streams (like Capacity Surveys) to ensure



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evidence is aligned to solutions. The five pilot areas are Digital & ICT, Environmental Health, Legal, Finance and Civil engineering.

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## **Improvement and Innovation Board – Report from Cllr Abi Brown OBE (Chairman)**

### **Office for Local Government (Oflog)**

1. We have continued to work with officials to remind them of the need to co-design Oflog to ensure that it delivers benefits for the sector.
2. Following discussions in which I raised the need for a regular meeting for political leaders on Oflog, I, along with the Chair and LGA Group Leaders, and leaders of other sector bodies have been invited to attend a Political Advisory Group. This has been described as a channel for Oflog to regularly consult and receive feedback from political leaders in the sector on Oflog's development. The first meeting of the Group will be early in 2024.
3. We submitted a response to the consultation on new draft metrics in which we set out our concerns about their proposals. Changes made in the final set reflect some of the points established in our response. However, our concerns about Data Explorer, including the ability to draw meaningful comparisons from its metrics, remain.
4. We have also made [a submission](#) to the inquiry on Oflog carried out by the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities select committee. We highlighted the need to establish opportunities for local government to collaborate and help shape the work of Oflog in capturing and sharing good practice.

### **Improvement and Assurance Framework for Local Government**

5. The LGA is developing an Improvement and Assurance framework for the local government sector, in response to a recommendation in the December 2022 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) report for the LGA that the LGA should “lead the design of a reshaped sector support and assurance framework for local government, reflecting the different needs seen across the sector now.”
6. The framework intends to provide an overview of the various elements that provide assurance of the performance of the local government sector and the way these elements fit together. This is underpinned by the sector-led improvement principles that councils are accountable locally and have collective responsibility for the overall performance of the sector.

7. A second phase of engagement with the sector on the framework draft has commenced and is set to run until the end of February. This phase will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to consider ways in which current checks and balances can be simplified or enhanced to provide greater assurance for the sector.
8. If you have any comments or feedback on the draft framework, please [share your views](#) through the consultation form.

### Annual Member Peer Conference

9. The LGA's Annual Member Peer Conference was held in November 2023 in Bristol. Over 140 member peers from across the country participated in the conference which was held, for the first time, over 2 days.
10. It was held at what is a key time for local government and sector-led improvement (SLI) in the context of key developments including the establishment of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) and a series of high-profile cases concerning a small number of challenged councils.
11. The conference gave Member Peers the opportunity to consider this operating context and what this means for their work and for SLI and Corporate Peer Challenge. Peers participated in a series of development sessions covering assurance and governance, the future of SLI, people services, transformation, a session for less experienced peers and a session on 'how to have difficult conversations'.
12. Feedback from the conference has been overwhelmingly positive with 100% of respondents indicating that they were satisfied with the overall conference. The LGA is committed to taking forward the feedback from the sessions to inform the ongoing development of SLI and Corporate Peer Challenge. Continued thanks to all the Member and Officer Peers who continue to support local government through the LGA's sector support programme.

### Sustainability Support Programme

13. [The Sustainability Hub](#) for the new Sustainability Support Programme has launched, offering a wide range of resources to help councils address environmental sustainability.
14. I chaired an event on "Decarbonising Transport" on 22 November. The session shared good practice examples from Cheshire West and Chester, Coventry and Cambridgeshire Councils, who are developing and delivering decarbonising



transport strategies and provision across urban and rural communities, across active travel, traditional forms of transport and public transport options.

15. Slides from the event can be viewed on [this webpage](#), alongside [the summary blog](#) from the session.
16. Councillors can now sign up to our [Sustainability Masterclasses](#) which will provide participants with a carbon literacy accreditation and the ability to make informed decisions about carbon reduction.

### Sector Support Programme 2023/24

17. Our [sector support programme for 2023/24](#) continues to provide critical support and drive improvement across local government. Across the 5 themes of Governance, Leadership, Finance, Workforce and Transformation, all councils have been able to access a comprehensive support offer, shaped directly through engagement with councils, to meet their needs.
18. We continue to see high engagement in our programmes, and satisfaction from those supported. Highlights from Quarter Three include:
  - 18.1. LG Inform has received over 400,000 page views during the year to date.
  - 18.2. 6 Leadership Academy programmes have started with a total of 88 members participating in the programmes. 64 members have already completed the programme.
  - 18.3. 1822 non-councillors have engaged with the Be a Councillor campaign. We have had 1066 engagements through 189 sign ups to the Be a Councillor newsletter, 802 attendees at events, and 75 enquiries from members of the public on how to stand for election and access resources.
  - 18.4. 96 Transformation Experts have been recruited for the Transformation Experts programme.
  - 18.5. The Future for Local Government Finance event took place on the 15 November 2023 with 50 delegates attending in person - the event was fully subscribed.

## Improvement Activity

### *Peer Challenge*

19. Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) continues to be a critical element of the LGA's sector support offer to councils. To date the LGA has delivered 36 corporate and finance peer challenges, with a packed schedule of delivery planned for January – March 2024.
20. A key part of the enhanced corporate peer challenge offer is the Progress Review, and to date we have completed 35 progress reviews with many more confirmed or in final discussion for the remainder of the year.
21. The LGA remains committed to continually improving its CPC offer to ensure it is achieving the most positive impact and that it meets the needs of the sector. At the last meeting of the Improvement and Innovation Board held on 15 December 2023, members agreed to a programme of changes to strengthen Corporate Peer Challenges (CPCs) and to better demonstrate both the value they add, and the assurance they already provide to the sector.
22. Underpinning this programme of work will be a communications plan with a strong narrative around how the new CPC fits into the wider improvement and assurance framework, the robustness of the CPC process and the impact and cost efficiency of CPCs.
23. If you would like to discuss your council having a CPC please contact your [Principal Adviser](#).

### *Leadership*

#### *National Recruitment Campaign*

24. We have launched our National Recruitment Campaign as part of the 2023/24 sector support offer, encouraging people to make a difference where they live through a career in local government.
25. The campaign arrives at a crucial point for local government, with more than 9 in 10 councils across the country experiencing staff recruitment and retention difficulties whilst demand for services continues to rise. It is vital to attract more people into the workforce.

26. I provided comment for the press release to highlight the value of a career in local government, including the wide range of challenging and rewarding roles available that deliver essential services to the communities we serve.
27. The campaign is initially being piloted in the North East of England over five weeks. The ambition is for the campaign to be expanded to the rest of the country to continue encouraging people to see the difference they can make through a local government career.
28. On the 10 January we held a launch event chaired by Cllr Graeme Miller, Chair of the Association of North East Councils (ANEC), North East Representative on the LGA Executive and Leader of Sunderland City Council. There were 82 attendees at the launch event. The event included presentations from 4 councils about how they will be using the campaign, alongside further insight into how the regional campaign will be rolled out.

#### *LG Challenge 2024*

29. The successful applicants for [Local Government Challenge 2024](#) were announced in December with officers forming a cohort from councils in London, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands, and Yorkshire & Humber.
30. The LG Challenge is an annual competition and leadership development programme for local government officers. Over six months, 10 officers take part in five real-life challenges at councils up and down the country, culminating in a final event at the [LGA's annual conference](#) in Harrogate (2-4 July), in which four finalists pitch their project proposals to delegates and a judging panel.

#### *Local Government Disability Champions Network*

31. The Local Government Disability Champions Network launched on 15 December 2023 with an online meeting Chaired by LGA Vice Chair Baroness Brinton. The Network will meet monthly and is open to anyone within local government who has a formal, or informal, role as a Disability Champion, as well as allies and external stakeholders.

#### *Finance Support and Improvement*

32. I was pleased to chair four round table discussions with senior officers to discuss research we commissioned into councils with experience of finance and governance challenges which led to either a s114 report or a capitalisation direction.

33. The discussions considered common themes identified in those councils in the lead-up to the s114 reports or capitalisation directions and considered any other relevant factors, including organisational culture and the effectiveness of member-officer relationships. A note summarising the key themes from the discussions will be published in February 2024.
34. The LGA, working with CIPFA, has successfully bid for over £600,000 additional funding from DLUHC to provide finance improvement support. The funding will support the delivery of training programmes to finance professionals and elected members and support the further development of a curriculum for s151 officers.

## Publications and engagements

This section outlines the publications that have occurred since the previous Councillors' Forum including public affairs, media releases, articles in First magazine and publications on our website.

### *Media Releases*

35. [Fulfilling a crucial role for children](#), 27 November 2023  
An MJ article on the market challenges and spiking demand in Childrens Services, with particular reference to funding concerns and service costs, alongside note of the attempts to deliver progress, for which I provided comment.
36. [LGA seeks more views on how to improve assurance](#), 28 November 2023  
Our press release highlighting the launch of the second phase of engagement with the sector on the Improvement and Assurance framework.
37. [Pressure for LGA peer review to be strengthened](#), 30 November 2023  
An MJ article highlighting our ongoing work to strengthen the process of peer review, including comments from Cllr William Nunn and myself.
38. [North East councils pilot national recruitment campaign](#), 10 January 2024  
An LGA media release on the launch of our National Recruitment campaign, which notes the value of a career in local government, for which I provided comment.

### *Local Government First Magazine*

39. [Peer Support](#), Dated November 2023

I wrote an article for First Magazine on the Annual Member Peer Conference hosted in Bristol in November and the central role of peers in championing sector led improvement.

40. [Effective Financial Management](#), Dated January 2024

I authored an article for First Magazine on the roundtables with senior officers that I chaired, which discussed LGA-commissioned research into councils with experience of finance and governance challenges.

41. [Be a Councillor](#), Dated January 2024

I wrote an article for First Magazine on the fulfilling role of being a Councillor, in being a leader within the community to create impactful change. I note the role we all have to play in nurturing the next generation of councillors and highlight our Be a Councillor campaign.

42. [Assurance framework views needed](#), Dated January 2024

A First article on the launch of the second phase of engagement for the [Improvement and Assurance Framework](#), for which I provided comment. We are seeking the sector's views on principles of assurance and accountability, examples of good practice, and asking for ideas on how the framework can be improved until the end of February.

*Publications*

43. [Councillor Mentoring Handbook](#), 7 November 2023

The handbook outlines the process and value of councillor mentoring to improve the quality of political and managerial leadership. Including approaches to mentoring, the mentoring relationship, and resources for practical support.

44. [Draft Improvement and Assurance Framework](#), 28 November 2023

The draft Improvement and Assurance Framework, which provides an overview of the various elements that provide assurance of the performance of the local government sector and the way these elements fit together.

45. [Peer Induction Pack](#), 8 December 2023

Guide to introduce the role of a peer, including the Peer Charter which sets out the key expectations and requirements of being a peer. The guide provides information about the time you will need to commit, payment of expenses and the peer placement process.

46. [An introduction to the peer challenge process and the role of peers](#), 8 December 2023  
An introduction to Peer Challenge, to support new LGA peers to be ready and confident to be part of an LGA peer challenge team.
47. [The LGA Cyber 360 Framework](#), 15 December 2023  
A framework to provide expert guidance to local authority senior leadership and management in cyber security culture, including good practice that councils can employ to improve their cyber security posture and practices.
48. [A councillor's workbook on handling casework](#), 11 January 2024  
A workbook designed to provide councillors with insight into the key skills to help you to be most effective in handling casework in your role.

## Events

This covers events where Improvement and Innovation Board members have been directly involved, rather than all events delivered during this period covered by the board's remit.

49. [Finance: Leadership Essentials](#), Oct/Nov 2023  
I contributed to sessions entitled "Financial Leadership in 2023 – A leader's perspective" at Finance Leadership Essentials. The programme help leaders and finance portfolio holders get to grips with the financial challenges facing their authority.
50. [Young Councillors Weekender](#) "Question Time", 18-19 November 2023  
I contributed to a workshop session entitled "Question Time" on our Young Councillors Weekender. The informal session was under strict confidential terms, allowing councillors to raise questions, problems and burning issues and put them to a panel of experienced councillors to hear how they might tackle them.
51. [2023/24 Leadership Academy programmes](#)  
Cllr Alan Connett, Lead Member of the Board, and Cllr Sarah Rouse, Member of the Board, have been programme co-ordinators on our 2023/24 Leadership Academy programmes.
52. [Next Generation](#), Friday 10 November 2023  
I was a guest speaker for the Conservative Group on a Next Generation module. Our Next Generation programme aims to support and encourage councillors to be bold and confident political leaders, progress in your political career and be champions of local government.



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## Safer and Stronger Communities Board – Report from Cllr Heather Kidd (Chair)

### Licensing

1. At the start of November, we held our Licensing Leadership essentials course for chairs and vice chairs of committees. The course focuses on how good committees are run and where licensing fits into wider council priorities. The course received excellent feedback from delegates, who said it had left them enthusiastic about their role and with improved levels of confidence. We charged a fee of £200 to attend the course, and this did not impact on attendance, so we will continue this approach moving forwards.
2. We are also hosting our [annual licensing conference on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024](#). The conference will examine the government's plans and expectations for licensing as well as exploring the challenges facing licensing authorities, highlighting innovative work being undertaken by councils and their partners and discussing how we can build on best practice.
3. We have [produced a range of tip sheets to support members of licensing committees](#). There are four tip sheets which cover the role of the chair/vice-chair, alcohol and entertainment licensing, taxi and private hire vehicle licensing, and gambling licensing. They provide a brief overview of the role of committee members within each licensing framework and some best practice ideas.
4. We have also [updated the LGA's guidance on taking a whole council approach to tackling gambling related harms](#). The guidance provides an overview of the gambling harms landscape and the role of councils in addressing and preventing harms.
5. Officers have [updated the LGA's guidance for councils on locally set licensing fees](#). The guidance aims to help councils to understand the full breadth of issues that should be considered when setting local licence fees in order to meet legal obligations and provide necessary reassurances to local businesses.
6. The LGA and Institute of Licensing (IoL) have [produced a training standard](#) which sets out what the LGA and the IoL believe to be a basic level of licensing committee member training. The aim of the training standard is to encourage licensing committee members to participate in training, drive consistency, and promote the training materials the LGA has developed. We hope the Home Office will promote the training standard when it next updates the guidance accompanying the Licensing Act 2003.

7. We have responded to the first of the Government's consultations on how to make non-surgical cosmetic procedures – including Botox, laser hair removal and dermal fillers – safer for consumers. The Government is proposing a three-tiered licensing regime based on risk, with the highest risk (red) tier procedures being regulated by the Care Quality Commission, and the lower risk amber and green procedures being regulated by councils. This first consultation is primarily focused on what tier each procedure should be located in. Our response emphasised concerns around capacity in regulatory services teams, the need for adequate training and expert support where required, locally set fees, and the need to take a comprehensive approach and to incorporate and update existing local regimes.
8. In preparation for the expected consultation on the Government's proposal to transfer control of taxi and private hire vehicle licensing to combined and upper tier authorities (as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper), officers have sent a brief survey to licensing authorities who will be affected by this proposal. To support this work, we are also hosting a roundtable discussion at the end of January with some county councils who would be likely to be given this responsibility to understand their views. This follows a Board request for officers to take a proactive approach to this consultation.
9. The [Home Office has launched a consultation](#) on whether to relax the licensing hours for certain matches (the semi-final and final) of the 2024 UEFA European Championship contingent on the England men's national football team and/or the Wales men's national football team and/or the Scotland men's national football team playing in those matches. The LGA has responded positively to this consultation.

## Modern slavery

10. [New modern slavery risk assessment and due diligence guidance for local authority commissioners of adult social care](#), produced by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab in tandem with the LGA, has been recently published. It provides advice on to how to set up effective local systems to identify and manage the risks of modern slavery in adult social care.
11. The LGA hosted a webinar in October to launch the guidance. The webinar was chaired by Cllr Heather Kidd, Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, and provided delegates with an overview of the guidance, as well as presentations from councils and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. Around 180 delegates attended the webinar.
12. In December officers hosted a meeting of the LGA's modern slavery network for council officers. This network is for officers leading on work to tackle

modern slavery and shares best practice. At this meeting, we had a presentation from officers at the Modern Slavery Regional Coordinators for Eastern Region Special Operations Unit, discussed effective approaches to training council staff on modern slavery (awareness and prevention), and best practice on housing victims of modern slavery. Officers will schedule another meeting for March and will also set up a working group on modern slavery training to scope out further work the LGA can undertake to support councils in this area.

## XL Bully Ban

13. New restrictions on XL Bully dogs are now in force (31 December) making it a legal requirement for all XL Bully dogs to be kept on a lead and muzzled when in public. It is also illegal to breed, sell, advertise, gift, exchange, abandon or let XL Bully dogs stray. Officers are still in discussion with Defra about new burdens funding to support councils with their new duties under the ban.

## Victims and Prisoners Bill

14. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) have been seeking the views of councils on draft guidance. Volunteer councils from the Community Safety Advisors Network (CSAN) gave comments and these were shared with lead members for sign off before submitting.
15. The comments included the need for continuity of long-term support for children, that victim's voices are included wherever possible and existing structures should be used where appropriate.
16. Comments also included the need for the guidance to reflect different local governance models.

## Domestic Abuse

17. The LGA have received requests from both Home Office (HO) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to collaborate with councils on best practice in tackling domestic abuse. The LGA will be hosting a series of webinars. The first is scheduled for 30 January 2024 and will focus on domestic abuse amongst those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The second will focus on commissioning and the third on children as victims in their own right.
18. MOJ and the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) will be attending.

## Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

19. In collaboration with the DAC Office, the LGA will soon be issuing a survey to councils to gain a better understanding of the cost and pressures in organising DHRs.
20. The research will inform the future of DHRs going forwards.

## Building Safety

21. The Joint Regulator Group (JRG) was formed to bring together regulators in the runup to the establishing of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). This LGA takes part in this group despite not being a regulator.
22. The JRG have been discussing ways of dealing with the recruitment challenges the different regulators have in having a skilled workforce for individual safety cases.
23. Furthermore the JRG are establishing a method of prioritising buildings for these cases. Primarily this will be based on height but the challenges of a bias towards London, the resourcing implications and the fact that height does not necessarily equate to being unsafe are all challenges being worked through.

## Community cohesion

24. We have continued to provide support to councils on responding to community cohesion and extremism challenges, through our work with the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE). This has included a series of practitioner roundtables and guidance on the SIGCE's knowledge hub platform, with further events planned.

## Prevent

25. New statutory [Prevent duty guidance](#) came into force on 31 December 2023, which applies to councils and other specific authorities under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and sets out expectations for each of the main statutory sectors and the ways in which they should comply with the Prevent duty. This [reflects the recommendations, accepted by Government](#), set out in the Independent Review of Prevent, published last year. This sits alongside the (non-statutory) [Prevent Duty toolkit for local authorities](#), which was also updated last autumn.

26. A 1½ day free residential [Leadership Essentials course for elected members on Prevent and counter extremism](#) has been scheduled for 14-15 March to explore local government's role in this space. Featuring a range of inputs and workshops, the programme will explore themes including national and local approaches to Prevent delivery, counter extremism and cohesion work, including exploring changes to the Prevent duty; national and local threats, including the online and conspiracy theory space; emerging and evolving challenges; and communications and community engagement on divisive issues. Further details and booking are via [grace.collins@local.gov.uk](mailto:grace.collins@local.gov.uk).

## Police and Crime Panels

27. On 8 November, Cllr Sue Woolley attended the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry "Police and Crime Commissioners: 10 years on" to provide the LGA view on the role of PCCs and Police and Crime Panels. Cllr Woolley gave evidence alongside the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the Police Foundation. A second evidence session of the Inquiry was held on 10 January with the Policing and Fire Minister, Chris Philp MP in attendance alongside, Roger Hirst PFCC for Essex and Mark Hardingham, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council.

## Fire Services Management Committee Update

28. The Fire Services Management Committee met on 6 December 2023. Presentations were given by the Home Office on their review of the National Fire Framework, by BT on the 999 outage and by Wayne Bowcock, National Fire Chiefs (NFCC) lead on leadership in the fire sector. Other items included LGA Fire Conference 2024, the Local Government White Paper, as well as the usual updates on pensions, workforce, building safety, the NFCC and the Fire Standards Board.
29. The LGA hosted a Fire Leadership Essentials Programme in Warwick on 1 & 2 November 2023. The programme included sessions on scrutiny and governance, the Home Office's work, building safety, responding to inspection, climate change, reflections from the LGA and an FRA Chair. Equality, diversity and inclusion is an important part of the programme, especially given the recent concerns regarding the culture of the fire service. The programme received excellent feedback, with all attendees being very or fairly satisfied. We will be hosting another Fire Leadership Essentials Programme in Warwick on 6 & 7 February 2024.
30. The LGA will be hosting its Annual Fire Conference in Bristol on the 12 & 13 March 2024. This is a key event in the calendar for fire and rescue services, and booking is open.

31. Councillor Frank Biederman, the Chair of the Fire Services Management

Committee, spoke at an event run by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) for chairs and chief fire officers of fire authorities. This is held twice a year and provides a forum for chairs of fire authorities and chief fire officers to come together to discuss key issues facing the fire and rescue service. Cllr Biederman spoke about his reflections on inspection, the key challenges for the sector, and considerations for HMICFRS to support fire services going forwards.

32. Councillor Biederman attended HMICFRS's Fire Performance Oversight Group in October, which provides enhanced monitoring for fire and rescue services that are not performing as expected. He highlighted the work the LGA has done to assist the services.
33. Councillor Greg Brackenridge (FSMC Vice Chair) attended the Fire Standards Board in December 2023. The LGA sits on the Fire Standards Board alongside the NFCC, the Home Office and the APCC. Agenda items included the Home Office's response to the White Paper, the Fire Standards Delivery Progress Report, implementation support for Leadership and People Fire Standards as well as general updates.
34. FSMC members have attended a number of Fire Customer Group meetings to discuss the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

### Contact details

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## Minutes of last Councillors' Forum meeting

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### Councillors' Forum

Thursday, 19 October 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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#### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Declarations of Interest</b>
	Cllr Kevin Bentley, Senior Vice-Chairman, welcomed Members to the Forum.
<b>2</b>	<b>Chairman's Update</b>
	Members noted the Chairman's Update.
<b>3</b>	<b>Inclusive Pavements: Making the streets accessible</b>
	The Chair invited Tim Burns, Head of Policy, Sustrans and Alisha Pathania, Research Officer, Transport for All to give a presentation the emerging findings of an upcoming report commissioned by the LGA. The report will highlight best practice from across local government in overcoming these challenges and will put forward recommendations to central government.
	Members asked questions and discussed the following topics:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for funding applications to be more streamlined</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>LGA Board Chair Reports</b>
	The Chairman invited the following Chairs to update on the work of their Boards:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and Young People Board – Cllr Louise Gittins</li> <li>Community Wellbeing Board – Cllr David Fothergill</li> <li>Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – Cllr Liz Green</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Digest of the last meeting held on 8 June 2023</b>



The digest of the last meeting was agreed as a correct record.



**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority	
Chairman	Cllr James Jamieson OBE	Central Bedfordshire Council	
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Shaun Davies	Telford and Wrekin Council	
	Cllr Joe Harris	Cotswold District Council	
	Cllr Marianne Overton	North Kesteven District Council	
	MBE		
	Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE	Warwickshire County Council	
Deputy-chairman			
Members	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council	
	Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council	
	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council	
	Cllr Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	
		Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
		Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
		Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland District Council
		Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester City Council
		Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell District Council
		Cllr Tudor Evans OBE	Plymouth City Council
		Cllr David Fothergill	Somerset County Council
		Cllr Louise Gittins	Cheshire West and Chester Council
		Cllr Peter Golds CBE	Tower Hamlets Council
		Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
		Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
		Cllr Richard Henry	Stevenage Borough Council
		Cllr Georgina Hill	Northumberland Council
		Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
		Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
		Cllr Brigid Jones	Birmingham City Council
		Cllr Heather Kidd MBE	Shropshire Council
		Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
		Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
		Cllr William Nunn	Breckland Council
		Cllr Tim Oliver	Surrey County Council
		Cllr Shabir Pandor	Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
		Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
		Cllr Leigh Redman	Somerset County Council
		Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
		Cllr Tony Saffell	North West Leicestershire District Council
		Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
		Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
		Cllr Lucy Stephenson	Rutland County Council
	Cllr Howard Sykes MBE	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	
	Baroness Taylor of Stevenage OBE	Stevenage Borough Council	
	Cllr Richard Wenham	Central Bedfordshire Council	

# LGA location map

**Local Government Association**  
 18 Smith Square  
 London SW1P 3HZ

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 Fax: 020 7664 3030  
 Email: [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)  
 Website: [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

## Public transport

18 Smith Square 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 18 Smith Square. Please telephone the LGA on 020 7664 3131.

## Central London Congestion Charging Zone

18 Smith Square 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)

