

Chief Executive's Report – September 2019

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

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

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

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

Recommendation

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

Action

As directed by members.

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Chief Executive's Report – September 2019

Achievements against our external priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- 1.1 **2020 Spending Review and 2019 Spending Round:** in August, the Government announced a delay to the multi-year Spending Review until 2020, with a one year Spending Round to be announced on 4 September 2019. In advance of the Spending Round announcement, our Chairman, Cllr James Jamieson, held meetings with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP, as well as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Rishi Sunak MP. He also wrote to the Chancellor and Secretaries of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Health and Social Care, and Education. He outlined our key asks that all current funding streams continue into 2020/21, including one-off funding, as well as additional funding to meet inflationary and demand pressures next year, amounting to £2.6 billion, and that Government produces additional clarity on further business rates retention and the review on relative needs and resources. He also talked about councils' work to prepare for Brexit and our calls for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to be a place-based, localised fund.
- 1.2 We responded to the Government Spending Round on 4 September, welcoming the announcement of a funding package of more than £3.5 billion for our vital local services next year. Our On-The-Day Briefing, circulated to council leaders, chief executives and chief financial officers, provided in-depth analysis of the big announcements for local government.
- 1.3 **The 2020 Spending Review and the 2019 Spending Round** are covered covered separately on the Leadership Board agenda.
- 1.4 **HCLG Committee - Local Government Finance and the Spending Review:** a cross-party group of MPs backed our calls to urgently provide councils with funding certainty next year, as well as to provide local government with the powers and flexibilities to lead communities. In a report on local government funding and the Spending Review, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has warned that local services will continue to decline until the Government tackles the £5.2 billion funding gap, which we highlighted in our evidence to MPs. The report also urges the devolution of genuine freedom to councils to create their own solutions to local problems, such as greater control over Council Tax.
- 1.5 **Business Rates Retention and the Fair Funding Review:** the joint officer level MHCLG and LGA System Design Working Group met in August. Discussions focused on the alternative model for business rates retention and the impact of more frequent revaluations on business rates retention.
- 1.6 **Business Rates Retention and the Fair Funding Review** are covered separately on the Leadership Board agenda.
- 1.7 **Audit issues:** there have been reported delays to the audit of many local authorities' accounts this year. Councillor Richard Watts, Chair of Resources Board, wrote to Public Sector Audit and Appointments (PSAA) and the Minister for Local Government about delays to the audit of 19 local authorities. In response, the Minister confirmed that these authorities would not incur additional audit costs due to this delay nor be subject to adverse performance reporting. We also pointed out that when the tighter audit timetable was introduced, we had raised concerns that the limited supply of auditors could result in the systems being vulnerable to problems like those now occurring. The letter therefore repeated our call that the deadline is reviewed and pushed back to 30 September for future years.
- 1.8 Separately the Government has announced a review of the audit framework in England to be led by Sir Tony Redmond. The review will look at the effectiveness of current audit arrangements and the transparency of reporting, with a final report anticipated in March 2020. Officers have already had an

initial informal meeting with Sir Tony Redmond and we will engage fully with the review.

- 1.9 **NAO consultation on New Code of Audit Practice from 2020:** the National Audit Office (NAO) has published its response to the first part of the consultation on the local code of audit practice which we submitted a response to earlier this year. The second stage of the consultation was launched at the end of August. This closes on 22 November and consults on the actual draft code, with the new code due to be laid before Parliament in early 2020.
- 1.10 **Council finances:** to help councils and others understand how their financial position compares with other authorities, we have produced a Key Financial Indicator report. This enables local authorities to see data on a range of financial indicators relating to a council and which allows for comparison with other councils, including changes in local government finance at a council-by-council level.
- 1.11 **Local Authority Governance and Accountability Framework Review Panel:** the inaugural meeting of this panel took place on 4 September. On the panel were representatives from the LGA (Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive), CIPFA, LGSCO, NAO, SOLACE and CfPS. The panel was chaired by Catherine Frances (Director General for Local Government and Public Service, MHCLG).

Priority 2 – Adult social care and health

- 2.1 **Adult social care research:** the County Councils Network (CCN), the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and London Councils all called for Government to address adult social care funding in the Spending Round. This is in the light of new reports from all three organisations. CCN pressed the Chancellor to confirm all current funding for social care, as well as fully fund next year's estimated £652 million increase in costs of delivering care. ADASS called on Government to seize the opportunity of the Spending Round to work together to develop a long term plan and funding solution that will provide clarity and certainty. London Councils research stated that councils in London delivered almost £500 million of efficiencies in adult social care services since 2015 and saved the NHS around £4.6 million per year through avoiding unnecessary hospital stays, reinforcing our message that councils are making a positive difference to people's lives and reducing pressure on NHS services.
- 2.2 **Health checks:** an evidence-based review into NHS health checks has been launched by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock MP. Positively, the review proposes a move to more tailored health checks. In welcoming the review, we pointed to the tremendous job councils have done by inviting more than 14 million eligible people to have a check over the last five years, resulting in 6.8 million checks. It is vital that councils receive the right investment to allow them to help relieve pressure on the NHS by engaging people in early conversations about health.
- 2.3 **Health inequalities:** we have developed place-based approaches for health inequalities in partnership with Public Health England and the Association of Directors of Public Health. The aim of this is to help close the 19 year gap in healthy life expectancy between the most and least affluent areas of the country by focusing on more than healthcare. The research argued that access to a high quality education, a warm and loving home, and a good income matter most to us
- 2.4 **Prevention Green Paper:** the Government published its Prevention Green Paper, which is consulting on how the nation can be healthier, with more of our lives lived in good health than at present. Our view is that this is a missed opportunity to make the most of councils' role and expertise. We called on Government to reverse the £700 million of public health cuts we have seen over the last five years and provide a joined-up approach to prevention. Only then can councils really help tackle significant health challenges like obesity, mental illness, substance misuse, sexually transmitted infections and the health impacts of loneliness.
- 2.5 We received a letter from the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care, Jo Churchill MP, highlighting how seriously the Government is taking the

prevention agenda, and local government's role in improving the nation's health.

- 2.6 **Smoking:** in partnership with Cancer Research UK, we have released a new publication explaining how councils can implement an effective tobacco control strategy. Smoking remains England's single greatest cause of preventable illness and avoidable death, resulting in 78,000 deaths from smoking-related diseases last year alone. Over 200 deaths every day are still caused by smoking.
- 2.7 **Drug deaths:** the Office for National Statistics has released new data about the number of deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales. Responding to the figures, we reaffirmed councils' commitment to ensuring drug users get the right support and treatment. Councils can do more to help these vulnerable people with the right resources.
- 2.8 **Sport England campaign:** Sport England and 15 leading health and social care charities have launched a new campaign aimed at encouraging those with long-term health conditions to get active. The 'We Are Undefeatable' campaign is aimed at those with conditions like diabetes, cancer, arthritis and Parkinson's to build physical activity into their lives. In our response, we linked to the work already being done by councils to develop exciting and innovative programmes that encourage greater wellbeing. Council services, such as leisure centres and parks, are key to helping people with long-term conditions keep active and well, and help to reduce NHS and social care spending and prevent loneliness.
- 2.9 **Health and Social Care Committee:** we submitted written evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee as part of its inquiry on the Budget and NHS Long Term Plan. Our evidence highlighted the need for a funding settlement for adult social care and public health in the Spending Round and other upcoming announcements.
- 2.10 **Treasury Funding of DHSC:** we briefed MPs ahead of a debate on Treasury Funding of the Department for Health and Social Care. We highlighted the LGA green paper for adult social care and called on the Government to come forward with a lasting settlement for social care.

Priority 3 – Children, education and schools

- 3.1 **SEND:** we called on Government to give mainstream schools incentives to support pupils with special needs and for councils to be fully funded to tackle the pressures they face in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services. This is in light of a 27 per cent rise in the number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) being placed in special schools since 2014, bringing the total to almost 139,000 pupils. Government can set clearer national expectations of what mainstream schools should offer children and young people with SEND, and Ofsted should place more emphasis on the importance of how inclusive a school is in their new inspection framework.
- 3.2 **Children's services:** councils were forced to overspend their children's social care budgets by £777 million in 2018/19, despite allocating an additional £542 million according to our analysis of new Government figures. We said this emphasised the immense pressure councils are under to support vulnerable children and young people, and that Government must ensure the sustainability of these vital services. Over the last decade, we have seen an 84 per cent increase in children being supported on child protection plans, and an additional 15,920 children in care.
- 3.3 **Children's happiness:** a new report from The Children's Society has found that almost a quarter of a million children in the UK are unhappy with their lives and that poverty in childhood is linked to lower well-being by age 14. In our response we commented that councils strive to help our children get the best start in life, despite seeing more than 560 cases of children affected by mental health conditions – in either themselves or those around them – every day, up 50 per cent in four years. We are pressing Government to provide the funds needed to enable councils to support young people and to restore early intervention services that can help children avoid more serious problems in later life.

- 3.4 **Homeless children:** a Children's Commissioner's report that showed over 124,000 children are growing up homeless, with some thousands living in shipping containers, office blocks and B&Bs. In addition, the report found a further 90,000 children were living in 'sofa-surfing' families. In our response, we said that councils are trying to provide good quality, secure family homes but the severe lack of social rented homes is preventing this. We called on Government to use the Spending Round to give councils the powers and finances to solve this problem.
- 3.5 **Children in care:** the Children's Commissioner's 2019 Stability Index has shown a rise in the share of older children and teenage care entrants who have more complex needs and potentially more expensive living arrangements. We responded that last year 88 children a day entered care and as more of those have complex needs, it can be harder for councils to find the best placements.
- 3.6 **Unpaid carers:** new National Institute for Health and Care Excellence draft guidelines have been released which aim to improve the wellbeing of unpaid adult carers. We responded that our care system would not function without their contributions and that councils are working to support as many of them as they can. We also said the next Spending Review should provide councils with the means to support all unpaid carers and fulfil the ambition of the Care Act to look after carers' health and wellbeing.
- 3.7 **Young people:** new data has shown that the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has risen by 28,000, from 764,000 to 792,000 over the last three months. We responded by highlighting the good work being done by councils, including working with local partners, 1-2-1 specialist support and supporting young people to prevent them becoming NEETs in the first place. Our statement called for councils to receive more devolved powers and funding to deliver a local apprenticeship offer and careers advice, and more support for schools. This will enable councils to help young people make career choices that are right for them, match local people to jobs in their area, support local business and boost the national economy.
- 3.8 **Secondary school places:** our latest analysis of Government data has shown that councils created 96,000 school places last year by working with existing primary, secondary and academy schools. Despite this, we warned that some children still faced the prospect of missing out on a school place. We are calling on Government to give councils powers to open new maintained schools and to direct free schools and academies to expand in their local areas. This will enable councils to meet growing demand for places and fulfil their legal duty to provide every child with a school place.
- 3.9 **Education Policy Institute:** we responded to a report from the Education Policy Institute on educational attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, highlighting the excellent track record councils have in running and improving schools. Some 89 per cent of council controlled schools retaining good or outstanding Ofsted ratings compared with 81 per cent of academies. We, therefore, called on Government to ensure the right funding and powers were in place to enable all children to receive the education they deserve.
- 3.10 **Serious youth violence:** the Home Affairs Committee issued its report on serious youth violence and echoed our calls for more funding for councils' youth services to provide cost-effective prevention and early intervention work. This follows evidence Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of our Safer and Stronger Communities Board, gave to the Committee at the end of January. We also supported the report's calls for a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, with engagement with a wide range of partners in the education and health sectors.
- 3.11 **Education Select Committee:** we submitted written evidence to the Education Select Committee on the Children's Social Care Workforce. Our submission pointed to the pressures facing children's social care services and the impact this was having on recruiting and retaining social workers.

Priority 4 – Housing

- 4.1 **#Councilhousing100:** this year marks 100 years since the Addison Act was passed, which introduced council-built social housing. To celebrate the anniversary, we have been looking at how councils built 5.5 million homes over the past century and why council building has declined. Many councils joined us

in commemorating the centenary on social media, sharing examples from their areas of new, innovative council housing. This is a great reminder of how councils can become major housebuilders again, helping to meet the Government's national housing targets.

- 4.2 **Building safety:** the Government has launched a consultation on options to reduce the height at which sprinklers must be installed in new high-rise blocks in England, while the application process for the £200 million ACM replacement fund for privately-owned buildings is opening on 12 September. We welcomed these announcements and the consultation, having previously recommended that the Government lower the height at which sprinklers are required in new buildings. The consultation closes on 28 November and we will be submitting a response. In addition, a new Protection Board is being set-up immediately with the Home Office and National Fire Chief's Council, and we understand its task will be to provide enhanced assurance around the safety of blocks with flammable ACM-cladding.
- 4.3 **Homelessness Reduction Act:** MHCLG has published a call for evidence seeking views on the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Councils are being encouraged to respond by the 15 October deadline.
- 4.4 **British housebuilding industry:** we briefed MPs ahead of a debate on the British housebuilding industry in the House of Commons. Our briefing outlined how with the right funding and powers, councils can build a substantial number of the homes the country needs.
- 4.5 **APPG for Housing in the North:** we submitted written evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Housing in the North's inquiry into the private rented sector in the North.

Priority 5 – Inclusive growth, jobs and devolution

- 5.1 **Town and regions fund:** the new Prime Minister announced out a series of policies aimed at 'levelling up' towns and regions, including through a £3.6 billion fund. This will initially benefit 100 towns, which will be able to use the money to improve their infrastructure and local services. We welcomed the recognition this fund gives to the role democratically elected councils have in delivering better transport, digital connectivity, housing, and other vital infrastructure like parks and libraries. These all create the strong communities and economies that help improve residents' lives. We are working with the new Government on how devolution can help areas deliver even more for their residents.
- 5.2 **Future High Streets Fund:** the Government has announced that an additional 50 towns will benefit from the £1 billion Future High Streets Fund. This money can be used to improve transport and access into town centres, convert empty retail units into new homes and workplaces, and invest in infrastructure. Funding allocations of up to £150,000 will be available for high streets to support the development of detailed project proposals that can be submitted for capital funding.
- 5.3 **New legal duty to tackle serious violence:** in July, the Government published its response to its recent consultation, announcing that it is creating a new legal duty to support multi-agency action to tackle serious violence. The LGA's response noted that we support a public health approach to tackling serious violence crime, but emphasised the need to ensure key services including youth services, youth offending teams and public health, are properly funded to support this.
- 5.4 **Funding for Violence Reduction Units:** in August, the Policing Minister, Kit Malthouse MP, confirmed the Government has awarded £35 million for 18 Police and Crime Commissioners to set up Violence Reduction Units. The Violence Reduction Units will bring together different organisations, including the police, local government, health, community leaders and other key partners to tackle violent crime by understanding its root causes. The new units will be responsible for coming up with a co-ordinated response. We are holding a conference on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime on 13 November.
- 5.5 **Serious Violence Taskforce:** Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, attended the Home Office's Serious Violence Taskforce. The meeting focused on

the Government's recent announcement of new funding for local Violence Reduction Units and the plans for the Youth Endowment Fund. LGA officers continue to liaise with the Home Office on this important issue. Subsequently, Cllr Simon Blackburn met with the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden, to discuss local government priorities to tackle serious violent crime and county line issues. Both Cllr Blackburn and Sophie Linden agreed the Serious Violence Taskforce should continue, and there should be stronger cross-departmental collaboration to make more progress on tackling serious violent crime.

- 5.6 **Knife crime:** further to the Government's Serious Violence Strategy, the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 introduced Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs). These preventative civil orders will be an additional tool that the police can use to help guide young people away from knife crime and serious violence.
- 5.7 **Domestic violence:** in June, the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill published its final report. The committee supported the LGA's calls for a greater focus on prevention and early intervention work to tackle the root causes of domestic abuse, including help from teachers and healthcare professionals. We are pleased that the committee has asked the Government to provide clarity on how non-accommodation based support services will be provided and funded, which Cllr Simon Blackburn called for in his oral evidence to the committee.
- 5.8 Subsequently, the Government published its response to the report by the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill and introduced the Domestic Abuse Bill into the House of Commons for its First Reading. In our media response, we highlighted the ability of councils to fund services for victims is limited by significant pressures on their budgets, with local authorities increasingly being forced to prioritise spending for those at immediate risk of harm.
- 5.9 **Rural broadband:** a new £30 million competition has been launched, aimed at helping rural communities across the UK access new 5G technology and maximize the opportunities it presents. Up to ten rural communities will be selected to run innovative trials and encourage investment in 5G. The competition is open to applications from consortia made up of organisations from the public, private and third sectors, and academia. The closing date is 25 October with the winning projects expected to be announced by the end of the year.
- 5.10 **Mobile connectivity:** a consultation has been launched looking at possible amendments to permitted development rights to support the extension of 4G and 5G mobile infrastructure. This will have an impact on the planning process and the role that councils play in the development of their areas. The consultation closes on 4 November and we will be submitting a response.
- 5.11 **Potholes:** councils receive a pothole complaint every 46 seconds, according to new analysis by the Federation of Small Businesses. This is further evidence that there is an urgent need to tackle the imbalance between national and local roads funding. Local roads make up 97 per cent of England's roads network but receive 43 times less Government investment.
- 5.12 **Roads funding:** the Department for Transport has announced a new £348 million funding competition to improve local roads over the next four years, which councils will be able to bid for. While we welcomed this much-needed funding, we also highlighted that councils need certainty and long-term investment in order to deliver the kind of improvement in our roads we need that will benefit all users.
- 5.13 **Waste strategy:** we issued a statement following the Government's response to the Environment Bill consultation. In our response, we welcomed the focus on some of the issues we have raised, including seeking further evidence on mandatory free garden waste collections, recognising the need for local flexibility on compulsory food waste collections and separate collections of materials for recycling. We also highlighted that any extra burdens placed on councils should be fully funded and that the onus was now on manufacturers to move to fully and easily recyclable packaging.
- 5.14 **Skills:** a new report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has found that the Apprenticeship Levy in its current form should be reviewed and revised. We supported these calls for reform to the levy in our response, and highlighted councils' continued concerns that the current skills training system doesn't work for everybody. We said that councils know best what skills their

areas need and should be able to design the programmes that fit those needs. We laid out our ambitious but practical vision for devolved and integrated employment and skills provision in [Work Local](#), launched at our Annual Conference in July.

- 5.15 **Licensing Act Handbook and case studies:** in July, the LGA published a new [handbook](#) for Councillors on the Licensing Act 2003. The handbook provides an overview of licensing legislation and examples of best practice. To accompany the handbook, a set of [case studies](#) on approaches to managing the night time economy has also been published, bringing together examples of initiatives driven by councils and their partners to address issues they have faced locally.
- 5.16 **Universal Credit:** we responded to a [report](#) from the Work and Pensions Committee which found that vulnerable groups have been worst affected by changes to welfare, [highlighting](#) that while councils support the principle of Universal Credit, concerns remain. These are focused on the impact of the freeze on housing benefit for private renters and the significant reductions in funding for the local safety net. We called on Government to restore funding for local welfare assistance schemes and to increase the Local Housing Allowance back to at least the 30th percentile of market rents when the freeze ends in 2020 to tackle the crisis in housing affordability.
- 5.17 **Evidence:** we submitted written evidence to the Education Select Committee inquiry into Adult Skills and Lifelong Learning. Our submission highlighted that local authorities are well placed to take on additional responsibilities, which would help to tackle localised skills and employment challenges.
- 5.18 We submitted written evidence to the Treasury Select Committee inquiry into Regional Imbalances. Our submission focused on the need for a new devolution settlement to tackle the individual challenges and opportunities of local communities.
- 5.19 We submitted written evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into The Progress of Devolution. Our response called for a new localism settlement as set out in #CouncilsCan and noted the current metropolitan focus of devolution deals.
- 5.20 We submitted evidence to the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry Select Committee. Our response called for the Gambling Act to be strengthened, ensuring a regulatory framework that is flexible and responsive to local need.
- 5.21 We submitted written evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee on Sustainable Tourism. Our evidence highlighted our climate emergency declaration and the work councils have done to support environmentally-friendly tourism.

Priority 6 – Britain’s exit from the EU

- 6.1 We are continuing to work with the nine regional chief executives acting as communications links in the central and local government Brexit work.
- 6.2 **Brexit webinar:** Robert Jenrick MP hosted the first Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Brexit Briefing for over 300 Council Leaders, Chief Executives and Brexit Lead Officers. He reiterated the vital role local government has to play in preparing for our departure from the European Union (EU). At the briefing were ministers and officials from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Home Office.
- 6.3 **Brexit** is covered separately on the Leadership Board agenda.

Priority 7 – Supporting Councils

7.1 #CouncilsCan Day: 2 September was [#CouncilsCan](#) day, the LGA's final push ahead of the Spending Round announcement to highlight the wide range of services and support councils provide, and the urgent need for them to get financial certainty. More than 3,400 [#CouncilsCan](#) tweets were sent from over 1,800 contributors, reaching 6.8 million people and at one stage we trended at number 6 in the UK. Over 130 councils were involved throughout the day, as well as over 125 partner organisations/stakeholders.

7.2 Sector-led improvement (SLI): our SLI programme continues to demonstrate its value, with the [latest figures](#) showing it has helped councils save more than £100 million in the last year. We have delivered 145 peer challenges, trained more than 800 councillors and recruited 120 NGDP graduates in 2018/19, while programmes such as our Housing Advisers Programme have helped councils build the homes they need. Our annual report also shows how leaders and chief executives value this work, with more than 95 per cent saying the support they received has had a positive impact on their council.

7.3 SLI lessons: the LGA launched a [joint report](#) with Shared Intelligence capturing the lessons from SLI in local government. It draws on a series of interviews with leaders and chief executives from 19 councils which have hosted Corporate Peer Challenges or received sustained improvement support from the LGA.

7.4 Local Government Ombudsman: the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman '[Review of local government complaints 2018-19](#)' report highlights that councils remain one of the most trusted parts of the public sector. Councils accepted and put in place Ombudsman recommendations in 99.4 per cent of cases, demonstrating that the sector recognises and is willing to put things right when they go wrong. We [welcomed](#) this news, whilst highlighting that increased demand coupled with funding cuts were putting this record at risk.

7.5 Resident satisfaction with councils: excellent news from our latest resident satisfaction [polling](#), which shows there has been an increase in satisfaction in several areas. This follows a set of results last year that were less positive. In addition, these results show improvements in the number of people who think their council acts on their concerns and keeps them informed.

7.6 Local government pay: negotiations over the 2020 pay claim have opened with trade unions demanding a 10 per cent pay increase, an extra day of annual leave, a two-hour reduction in the working week and a workplace stress and mental health review. Colleagues in our workforce team will be consulting with councils at regional pay briefings during September and October.

7.7 Library and Culture Peer challenges: in July we completed our current round of library and culture peer challenges, funded by our contract with Arts Council England (ACE). Nine library peer challenges and three cultural peer challenges took place between March and July 2019. Feedback from participating councils has been very positive with some officers who took part now joining other LGA challenges as peer officers. This was the first time that we had offered library sector specific peer challenges and following their success we are delighted that a further round has been commissioned for the autumn.

7.8 National Graduate Development Programme: the [NGDP](#) has recruited its biggest ever cohort for 2019/20, with 150 graduates starting with authorities across the country this autumn.

7.9 Productivity Experts: the [Productivity Experts Programme](#) provides an opportunity for councils to access expertise that will provide them with the skills they need to realise ambitious efficiency savings and income generation.

Internal Priority – A single voice for local government

LGA Membership

8. All LGA member councils will remain in LGA membership for the forthcoming year.
9. Four councils are currently on notice to leave the LGA on 31 March 2020. They are:
 - East Staffordshire Borough Council
 - Hastings Borough Council
 - Leicestershire County Council
 - Lincolnshire County Council
10. The Broads Authority National Park is on notice to leave LGA associate membership.
11. Chippenham Town Council have joined associate membership via our corporate scheme with NALC.
12. Four councils remain out of membership – the London Boroughs of Bromley, Wandsworth and Barnet and Gosport Borough Council.

LGA properties

13. 18 Smith Square: work on the third floor fit-out is now underway in preparation for the arrival of Guinness Asset Management – date for their arrival to be confirmed. Agents Cushman and Wakefield continue to report positive feedback on the second floor and remain confident of securing a tenant in due course. An update on the transfer of the building to the LGA is included separately on the agenda.
14. The Stills/Layden House: We have now agreed heads of terms with a single tenant for all office floors. There continues to be high levels of interest in the remaining ground floor retail units and the basement floors and a verbal update is included separately on the agenda.

Membership engagement by the Strategic Management Team

Chief Executive	
25 July	Cheshire East Council, Chief Executive
2 August	Cambridge City Council
7 August	Leicester City Council, Chief Executive
13 August	Calderdale Council, Chief Executive
5 September	DCN Chief Executive Meeting
5 September	Cherwell District Council & Oxfordshire County Council, Chief Executive
6 September	East of England Chief Executive Forum
6 September	Central Bedfordshire Council, Chief Executive
10 September	Kent Joint Chief Executive Meeting
<i>Forward plan</i>	

16 September	Hampshire County Council, Chief Executive
17 September	South Tyneside Council, Chief Executive
18 September	Spelthorne Borough Council, Chief Executive
25 September	National Housing Summit, Mark Lloyd speaking slot
7 October	Deal Conference 2019, Mark Lloyd speaking slot
11 October	North East Chief Execs meeting (ANEC)
Deputy Chief Executive	
9 August	Birmingham City Council

Media

Funding for local government
Chairman, Cllr James Jamieson, was interviewed live on BBC News Channel about our response to the Chancellor's Spending Round announcement which delivered a funding package of more than £3.5 billion for vital council services next year (BBC Radio 2, BBC 2, BBC Radio 5 Live, Sky News Radio, LBC Radio, and by the FT, Sun, Mail, i paper, Sky News Online, Mirror Online, Express Online)
Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the Improvement and Innovation Board, was interviewed live on TalkRadio about our response to a HCLG Committee report, "Local government finance and the 2019 Spending Review", warning that local services are at "breaking point". Chairman James Jamieson's response was also reported (Guardian Online, Express, Telegraph)
Our funding gap analysis was reported in coverage of the proposed reforms to social care funding (FT, Mail)
Coverage of the Labour party's plans to rejuvenate the country's high streets featured our previous calls for councils to be given more autonomy over business rates (FT)
We featured in an opinion piece about appointing third-party auditors to audit businesses (FT)
Our response to the Department for Transport announcement that it will open a £348 million funding competition to improve local roads over the next four years (ITV Online, Mail Online)
We responded to FSB research about how almost 700,000 potholes in local road surfaces were reported last year, costing £1 billion in repairs, with our call for councils to be able to invest in their local roads (Times, Telegraph Online)
Adult social care and health
Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, wrote exclusively for the Express ahead of the Spending Round, calling for government to confirm all current funding streams, including the Better Care Fund, will continue next year along with extra funding provided to meet rising adult social care cost and demand pressures (ITV News Online, Mail Online, Express Online)
CWB Chairman, Cllr Ian Hudspeth, was interviewed live on LBC Radio about our call for £700 million of public health funding cuts to be reversed in the Spending Review (BBC Online, BBC News channel)
Cllr Ian Hudspeth, CWB Chairman, was interviewed live on Talk Radio and BBC South Today, following our response to the Prime Minister's NHS funding announcement calling for adult social care to be adequately resourced.
CWB Chairman Cllr Ian Hudspeth was interviewed live on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour programme as part of a discussion on 15-minute care visits, with our call for government to publish its social care green paper as soon as possible and find a long-term funding solution for the sector (BBC News Channel, BBC Radio 4 You and Yours)
CWB Board Chairman, Cllr Ian Hudspeth, responded to a County Councils Network report warning that care services are "at risk" (Mail Online)
Our lines on social care funding featured on a front page about the launch of the Mail's dementia care campaign, which the LGA has supported (Mail)
We warned that the elderly and those with heart and respiratory problems are most at risk of falling ill on the hottest day of the year (Telegraph Online, Express Online, Express, Huffington Post)
Our press release warning about the increasing use of improvement and performance enhancing drugs (IPEs) and the need for a reversal of public health funding reductions to help deal with this trend (Independent, People, Sun)
Channel 5 News reported our health visitor lines, calling for greater funding to keep pace with scale and demand, in response to an NSPCC campaign for a minimum number of face-to-face visits to new parents from the same health visitor.
Our call for councils to be allowed to tackle existing clusters of takeaways, in response to new research linking availability of food outlets with obesity levels (Guardian Online)
We featured in coverage of a petition, signed by more than 150,000 people, calling for urgent action to fix the social care system (BBC Online)

Children, education and schools
Deputy Chairman Cllr David Simmons was interviewed about our Spending Round press release showing that councils were forced to overspend their children's social care budgets by nearly £800 million last year in order to try and keep children safe (ITV News, Channel 5 News, Sun, Guardian)
Cllr David Simmonds featured on BBC Radio 4's Today programme to discuss the issue of private equity firms buying up small foster care agencies (BBC Radio 2, BBC News, BBC Online)
Cllr David Simmonds appeared live on the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire programme to discuss our press release calling for more council powers on home education (Guardian Online)
Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed live on the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire Show about the impact that cuts to council funding have had on local youth services (Independent Online)
Children and Young People Board Chair, Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, called for children's services to be adequately funded in the Spending Round, following a Good Childhood report by the Children's Society which found that childhood happiness has slumped to its lowest level in a decade (Independent Online)
Our Spending Round press release warning of a secondary school places shortage next year and called for councils to be able to open new maintained schools if residents support them, and for new powers for councils to require academies and free schools to expand to meet local demand (Sun Online, Times, Mail, Guardian and LBC)
Our Spending Round press release calling for schools to be given incentives to admit more pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and for the Government to plug the £1.2 billion funding gap councils face supporting children and young people with SEND (Independent Online, BBC News, Observer)
Calls by the National Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Centre –a partnership between children's charity Barnardo's and the LGA - for primary schools to teach about FGM when the new relationships and health education guidance is introduced (BBC Online, Mail Online, Independent Online, Guardian Online, Metro Online, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 4)
Our response to the Education Policy Institute report on the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers (ITV Online)
Our response to the Children's Commissioner's report on children in care that found the number of over-16s going into care has increased by 25 per cent in four years (Independent Online, BBC Radio 1)
Our Workers Survey featured on Huffington Post about cuts to youth services and knife crime.
We responded to research commissioned by the Social Market Foundation on children in care. It found almost 50,000 children are now in the care of councils whose services are judged to be inadequate or requiring improvement. It shows that in 2018, there were 47,085 "looked-after children" in councils with such ratings (Observer)
Our lines in response to the cost of school uniforms and council grants for school uniforms (BBC Online, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio 2, BBC Victoria Derbyshire Show)
Our statement on personal health budgets for disabled children was reported on (BBC Radio 4's You and Yours programme)
Housing
Deputy Chairman Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed on BBC One O'Clock News and featured on BBC Ten O'Clock News about a report by the Children's Commissioner on homeless children living in temporary accommodation. It found that thousands of children are growing up in converted shipping containers, office blocks and bed and breakfast accommodation (Mail Online, the Independent, Guardian, Telegraph, Times, BBC Online)
Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the Improvement and Innovation Board, featured on Sky News Radio and LBC news bulletins on our Spending Round press release calling for reform to the Right to Buy scheme to help council housebuilding efforts (Mirror)
Our press release which warned hundreds of children face being homeless during the summer holidays because of the housing crisis (Sky News, TalkSport, TalkRadio, Metro Online, i paper, Mirror, Guardian)
Our response to reports that councils may have to ask people to rebuild newly erected extensions, lofts and basements because of a crisis in building inspections arising out of the Grenfell Tower disaster (Sunday Telegraph)
Our lines on home adaptations, following an investigation into the lack of homes suitable for our ageing population (ITV Online)
Inclusive growth, jobs and devolution
Our Spending Round press release, calling for powers and funding to better support young people find employment, education or training (i paper)
Supporting councils
Cllr Peter Fleming, I&I Board Chairman, appeared on Sky News Radio and BBC Radio 2 and 5 Live news bulletins about our press release, warning of the life-threatening risks to reckless thrill-seekers who jump into water from extreme heights – known as 'Tombstoning'. (Sky News, LBC News, Express Online, Independent Online and the Mirror)
Our previous lines on PrEP and support for the National Aids Trust (NAT) to take the NHS to court to bring the drug to the public (I paper)
Our lines on animal welfare legislation and the variance in councils' policies and fees relating to dog breeders.

It follows confusion caused by government licensing rules (BBC Radio 4's You & Yours)
Our response to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announcement that by 2023, all councils will have to offer households a comprehensive recycling service under the new Environment Bill (Telegraph, Times)
The LGA's previous warning that funding for test knife purchases is running out (Sky News Online, ITV Online, LBC, I, Independent)
Our lines on the theft of Blue Badges rising by 45 per cent in the past year (Mail Online)
A single voice for local government
Cllr Peter Fleming, I&I Board Chairman, was interviewed live on Sky News and Sky News Radio about our press release calling for tougher sentences for illegal money lenders. Debt advice enquiries are at a record high with more than 12,500 in the UK every week, with the LGA warning people not to borrow from illegal moneylenders (LBC, the Sun on Sunday)
Cllr Peter Fleming was interviewed on Sky News Radio, LBC Radio, BBC South East about our call for more powers for councils in the upcoming Spending Round to help to tackle lorries causing "havoc and mayhem" in towns and villages in England (ITV Online, Sky News Online, Times, Sunday Times, Mail, Guardian, Telegraph and i news)
LGA Deputy Chairman Cllr David Simmonds appeared on BBC's Countryfile to discuss how councils take in refugees as part of an episode looking at how the UK countryside is still providing sanctuary to refugees of modern-day conflict.
Our lines on the Domestic Abuse Bill in response to new laws to protect survivors of domestic abuse in England and Wales have been introduced in Parliament (i paper online, BBC Online)
Our response to a front page story on recycling charges made by some councils for non-household waste (Telegraph, iNews)
Our press release from earlier this year which warned that rogue used tyre sellers are putting lives at risk (Mail Online)
Our lines that councils need more money in the Spending Round to invest in all council services, including parks and playgrounds (BBC Breakfast)
Britain's exit from the EU
Cllr Kevin Bentley, Brexit Taskforce Chairman, was interviewed live on BBC Radio 4's Today programme about the no-deal Brexit preparation funding announced by the Government (Sky News, the Times, i paper, Guardian Online, and Independent Online)
Cllr Kevin Bentley featured on ITV Online in a story about businesses and councils in the East of England stepping up their planning for leaving the EU without an agreement.
We featured our lines in coverage of what councils have done in preparation for Brexit. Councils have spent money repaving roads, hiring vets, stockpiling food for school meals and registering their own staff for the EU settled status scheme in preparation for Brexit, Freedom of Information requests to local authorities (BBC Online)