

## **2019 Queen's Speech**

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Leadership Board on the 2019 Queen's Speech and to seek approval on the Bills the LGA should prioritise for the purpose of its lobbying.

### **Summary**

The paper summarises the key announcements in the 2019 Queen's Speech.

### **Recommendation**

The paper sets out the key legislation affecting local government in the 2019 Queen's Speech and provides recommendations for prioritising LGA activity.

### **Action**

As directed by the Leadership Board.

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## **2019 Queen's Speech**

### Prioritisation of Bills

1. Following a Queen's Speech, the LGA prioritises the legislation that the organisation will seek to influence. This prioritisation ensures that, by focusing our lobbying, the best results are achieved for local government. Based on initial feedback from our Boards, and following an assessment of the implications of the Government's legislative agenda, we are using the following system of prioritisation:
  - 1.1 High profile engagement:** For a Bill identified as high profile, the LGA lobbies at each stage of the Bill's passage through Parliament, works with our network of MPs and Peers to table amendments, uses media and stakeholder engagement to keep our priorities on the national agenda, and engages with the government department leading the legislation.
  - 1.2 Medium profile engagement:** For legislation that is important, but does not require as much active lobbying, we will ensure – through constructive engagement with Ministers and officials – that the Bill does not negatively impact on local government. These Bills will be managed under the medium profile category as our engagement is usually limited to advising on the detail of the Bill. However, if the Bill is amended to have a more significant impact on local government, it can be reclassified into the 'high' category.
  - 1.3 Monitoring:** For legislation that has limited impact on local government, or is not captured by our corporate priorities, the LGA will seek to monitor its progress. The status of Bills categorised under 'monitoring' will be reviewed to ensure that any changes do not require more active participation and lobbying by the LGA.
2. This year the Queen's Speech also made a series of non-legislative announcements on devolution, adult social care, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Armed Forces Covenant, online harms, electoral integrity, infrastructure, rail reform and animal welfare.
3. We have prioritised the proposed White Papers and for these we are engaging with Government, Parliament and other stakeholders to shape them and any future legislative commitments that may follow.
4. At the time of writing we are also exploring which Private Members Bills (PMBs) will be of interest to us and likely to carry enough support in Parliament to be passed. We will monitor these Bills and make decisions on whether to engage with them on a case by case basis, taking guidance from Leadership Board and our policy boards as required.
5. Set out below is the proposed prioritisation of legislation and White Papers in the Queen's Speech which have been identified as being of interest to councils.

<b>Priority</b>		
<b>High profile engagement</b>	<b>Medium profile engagement</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
Environment Bill	NHS Bill	Trade Bill
Building Safety Standards	Non Domestic Ratings (Lists) Bill	Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill
Domestic Abuse Bill	Infrastructure	Online Harms
Serious Violence Bill	Armed Forces Covenant	Railway Reform
Broadband	Electoral Integrity	Animal Welfare
Adult social care		Sentencing Bill
Devolution White Paper		
Education funding		
Mental Health White Paper		

### High Profile engagement

6. **Environment Bill:** The Environment Bill proposes measures that aim to improve air and water quality, tackle plastic pollution and restore habitats so plants and wildlife can thrive. The measures in the Bill seek to: establish a new system of green governance and accountability; drive a shift in maximising resource efficiency; enable greater local action on air pollution; secure long-term, resilient water and wastewater services; create or restore wildlife habitats; and give the Secretary of State the power to amend legislation regulating the use of chemicals. It also creates an Office for Environmental Protection.
7. Based on previous guidance from our members, this Bill is a high priority for the LGA. We will be working with parliamentarians and officials as the legislation and its delivery will be important to councils. It is an opportunity to shape proposals relating to air quality, biodiversity net gain, planning, and waste and recycling.
8. **Building Safety Standards:** The Government announced that it will bring forward laws to implement new building safety standards. The main elements of the legislation are: a new safety framework for high-rise residential buildings, taking forward the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building safety, and in some areas going further by, for example, developing a new framework to develop a new system to oversee the whole built environment, with local enforcement agencies and national regulators working together to ensure that the safety of all buildings is improved.

9. The Bill is a priority for the LGA as it is vital we reform our failed building safety system. The legislation will also be an opportunity for us to, amongst other issues, make the case for councils and the fire service to be given tougher enforcement powers.
10. **Domestic Abuse:** The Domestic Abuse Bill has been carried over from the previous parliamentary session and aims to transform the approach of the justice system and other agencies to victims of domestic abuse. The Bill brings forward proposals to define domestic abuse and establish in law the Domestic Abuse Commissioner post. The Bill also creates a consolidated new domestic abuse civil prevention and protection order.
11. This Bill is a high priority for the LGA and councils as it is vital that all forms of domestic abuse are addressed. We will be briefing in support of the legislation as it is an opportunity for us to highlight that a clear legal definition of domestic abuse will provide clarity for councils and other agencies in undertaking their work. We are also supporting the creation of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner which will help to raise the profile of domestic abuse and ensure momentum in strengthening organisations' approach to it, as has been seen with the appointment of a Modern Slavery Commissioner. Councils will work collaboratively with the new Commissioner to support the objectives of the Bill and help to embed good practice across the country. As the legislation is debated in Parliament, we will be making the case for a greater focus on prevention and early intervention measures to tackle the root causes of domestic abuse and support more victims.
12. **Serious Violence Bill:** The Serious Violence Bill will place a new duty on public sector bodies, ensuring they work together to address serious violence. The Bill will also amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships, which include local police, fire and probation services, as well as local authorities and wider public services.
13. This Bill is an opportunity for us to re-state our support for a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, which has become an increasing priority for councils. Reducing re-offending will be important in ensuring we have safer and stronger communities. Linked to this, we can also make the case that we are disappointed the Government has not committed to improving passenger safety by introducing legislation to reform the law around taxi and private hire legislation - some of which dates back to 1847 and horse-drawn hackney carriages. Councils cannot take enforcement action against the rising numbers of drivers licensed by other authorities operating in their area. This is causing frustration to councils and local drivers who, depending on what the local rules are, may have had to comply with different licensing standards.
14. **Broadband:** The Government has committed to bring forward new legislation that will help accelerate the delivery of fast, reliable and secure broadband networks to millions of homes. As new legislation comes forward we will make the point that access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is a necessity for all communities. The Government's commitment in the Queen's Speech to amend the Building Act 1984, so that Building Regulations require all new build developments to have the infrastructure to support gigabit-capable connections is positive. It recognises the case the LGA has been making to give councils this statutory backing.

15. The Government has recently pledged £5 billion to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach 20 per cent of the country. The commitment to create a cheaper and faster light-touch tribunal process for telecoms companies to obtain interim code rights (or access rights) for a period of up to 18 months is an important piece of enabling legislation and we will be working to influence the detail of how this proposal might work in practice.
16. **Adult social care:** The Government has committed to bringing forward proposals to reform adult social care in England to ensure dignity in old age. Engaging with this process will be a key priority for the LGA and an opportunity for us to continue to make the case for securing the sustainable future of adult social care, as this is one of the major issues facing society. Our work over the last 15 months has sought to keep social care high on the agenda and we are committed to working with the Government, parliamentarians and stakeholders to bring about meaningful change.
17. **Devolution White Paper:** The Government has committed to an English devolution White Paper which will set out its ambitions for unleashing regional potential and enable decisions that affect local people to be made at a local level. Following previous guidance from the Leadership Board, it is recommended that this is prioritised as taking decisions on running local services closer to where people live is key to improving them and saving money.
18. Through a series of devolution deals a number of mostly urban areas have, over the last five years, demonstrated the benefits of giving local leaders greater power and resources. The announcement of a White Paper is encouraging and provides an opportunity to bring fresh energy to this debate. The new approach needs to build on the work of Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to develop a package of sustainably-funded devolved powers that is available to all of English local government and can be delivered through flexible governance arrangements. We are working closely with councils and the Government to put forward a strong case for a devolution offer that allows all councils and combined authorities to achieve their ambitions.
19. **Education funding:** The Government used the Queen's Speech to restate its plans to give schools new funding by investing a total of £14 billion more over three years. The Government will also move towards delivering this funding directly to schools, through a single national formula, so that it is fair and equitable for every school in the country. The LGA has welcomed the Government's announcement to increase schools budgets by £7.1 billion by 2022/23, as well as an additional £780 million for council high needs budgets to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for 2020/21. We will continue to make the point that the local flexibility allowed under the existing 'soft' National Funding Formula must continue to allow councils to work with schools locally to make sure that available funding addresses local needs and priorities.
20. **Mental Health White Paper:** The Government has committed to continuing to work to reform the Mental Health Act to improve respect for, and care of, those receiving treatment. It will publish a White Paper, which will pave the way for reforms to the Mental Health Act. This will be an opportunity for the LGA to make the point that local government plays a key role supporting people detained under the Mental Health Act.

We will also be recommending that links be made with the related Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act so that people can access the support and independent advocacy they need.

Medium profile engagement

21. **NHS Bill:** The NHS Bill introduces new laws that will be taken forward to help implement the National Health Service's Long Term Plan (LTP) in England. The LGA broadly supports the intentions of the Bill, though we recognise that, like the LTP itself, the legislation is likely to focus almost solely on measures to enable greater collaboration between NHS organisations. This legislation is an opportunity to make the point that making it easier for different parts of the NHS to work together is important but, in making legal changes to enable better collaboration between NHS organisations, the Government needs to avoid inadvertently creating a two-tier system which introduces more barriers to collaboration between the NHS and councils.
22. **The Non-Domestic Ratings (Lists) Bill:** The Non-Domestic Rating (Lists) Bill seeks to change the frequency of business rates revaluations undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). Revaluations currently take place every five years. The Bill will increase this to every three years, starting in April 2021. We will continue to make the point that the proposal for businesses to provide more regular information to the VOA, as part of a move to more frequent valuations, is positive. It should also be accompanied by measures to significantly reduce the backlog of appeals.
23. **Infrastructure:** The Government has committed to bringing forward a National Infrastructure Strategy. This will set out a long-term vision to improve the nation's digital, transport and energy infrastructure. This process is an opportunity for us to make the case that the Government's infrastructure strategy needs to implement the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission. Specifically, that councils should have 'stable, devolved infrastructure budgets, as Highways England and Network Rail have', which would mean providing councils with a funding allocation in advance for five years. This is the most effective way for us to deliver infrastructure improvements quickly in a way that complements local growth strategies.
24. **Armed Forces Covenant:** The Queen's Speech announced that the Government will continue to invest in our Armed Forces. It will also continue to honour the Armed Forces Covenant. We will use this as an opportunity to make the point that Armed Forces serving personnel, veterans and their families are valued members of our communities and councils are supporting them. We also support the creation of the Office for Veterans' Affairs and will make the case that the Government now needs to ensure that the Office is given powers and funding, including additional funding for councils to replace capacity that is being lost as a result of the ending of valuable local government projects funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.
25. **Electoral Integrity:** The Government has announced that it will seek to take steps to protect the integrity of democracy and the electoral system in the United Kingdom. The main elements of the legislation are requiring voters to show an approved form of photographic ID in order to vote at a polling station in a UK parliamentary election in Great Britain and local election in England and a requirement on returning offices to provide equipment to support voters with sight loss and other disabilities who find it

difficult to vote. Proposals that support disabled people to cast their vote are positive and the new duties on councils should be fully funded to help ensure they work effectively and their intention to increase voter participation is realised. We will also continue to monitor the proposals so that on behalf of councils, we can understand more about the proposals for voter identification, particularly any new costs.

### Monitoring

26. **Trade Bill:** The Government will implement new regimes for fisheries, agriculture and trade, seizing the opportunities that arise from leaving the European Union. The purpose of the legislation will be to make the most of new opportunities that come from having an independent trade policy and to deliver for UK businesses and consumers. This is an opportunity for us to promote the International Trade Select Committee's recommendation that local government should have a voice in new trade policy as the LGA will be seeking to work with Government to develop this policy.
27. **Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill:** The Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill will bring to an end free movement in preparation for a points based immigration system from 2021. EU citizens moving to the UK will be able to apply for temporary immigration status in the run up to the new skills-based system. It will also confirm the deadline for applications under the EU Settlement Scheme and the right to appeal. We will monitor this legislation to understand the impact on public services as we need to ensure that the changes guarantee their stability. We will also continue to work with councils and the Home Office to ensure that residents and workers are able to apply for settlement within deadlines, with funding sought for specific roles in supporting looked after children and adults receiving care and support.
28. **Sentencing Bill:** The Sentencing Bill seeks to address violent crime, and to strengthening public confidence in the criminal justice system. New sentencing laws will see that the most serious offenders spend longer in custody to reflect better the severity of their crimes. We will monitor this legislation to see if it impacts on the work of local government.
29. **Online Harms:** The Government will introduce a new duty of care on companies towards their users, with an independent regulator to oversee this framework. The LGA supports the need to address the abuse and exploitation of our online environment and social media through the creation of a duty of care on online platforms supported by an independent regulator. We will work with national and local government to understand how we can better support councillors who are experiencing online intimidation, abuse and threats against them.
30. **Railway Reform:** The Government has committed to bring forward proposals on railway reform. We welcome indications from the Government that there may be a greater role for local government in rail and we await detailed proposals with interest. It will be important to make the point that there are areas of the country that would benefit from further rail devolution with local authorities having an appetite to take more of a role in rail. There is also evidence that devolution, especially for suburban rail, can bring strong benefits for passengers.

31. **Animal welfare:** The Queen's Speech committed the Government to bring forward proposals to promote and protect the welfare of animals. We have welcomed the announcement of new legislation to increase maximum sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years. The passing of new legislation will allow us to make the point that councils will always do what they can to help promote the protection and welfare of animals, however, to maintain this work and ensure councils can take forward prosecutions, they need proper resources to ensure a consistent, long-term approach to animal welfare.
32. **Further Bills in the Queen's Speech:** The Queen's Speech also introduced other legislation that does not affect local government. We will monitor these Bills as they are published and should there be a need to engage with them on behalf of local government, we will work with the relevant policy board(s) and Group Offices to agree our corporate positions.