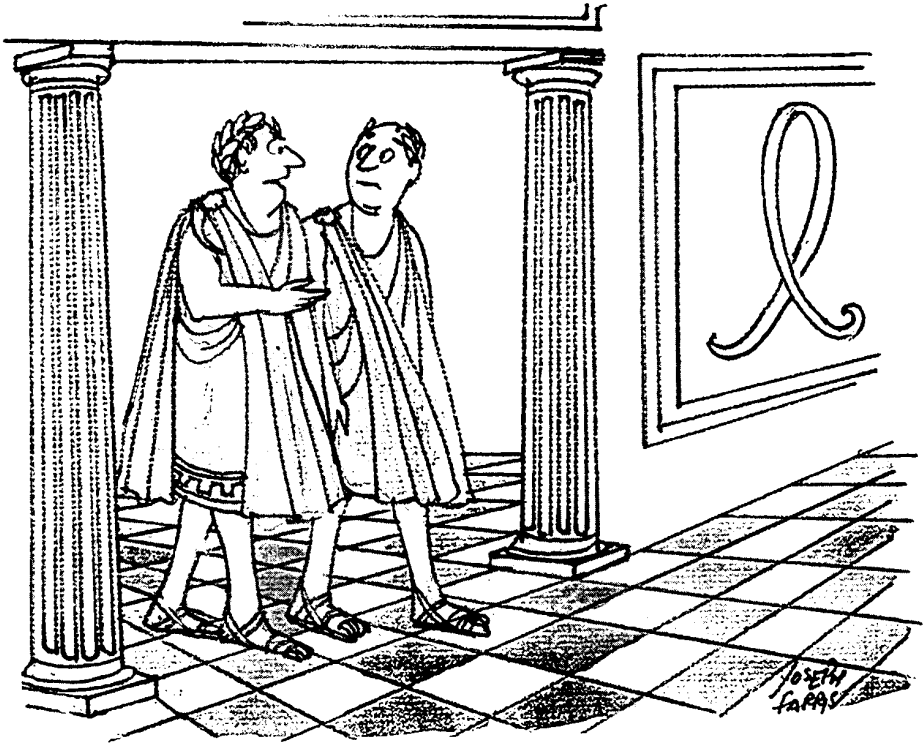




LGA group

the **LGA quick guide
to local government**





"What Caesar doesn't understand
is that all politics is local!"

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Acknowledgements

This guide has been written by Nathan Stower from the LGA Group public affairs and campaigns team, with contributions from Thomas Wingfield and Christina Dykes of the Leadership Centre for Local Government. Additional material is taken from *LGA factsheets* produced by LGA Analysis and Research and the LGA's *Journalists' guide to local government* written by Gillian Enlund. Many facts and figures are taken from the Department for Communities and Local Government's *Local Government Financial Statistics England 2009*.

What is local government?

While the origins of local government are medieval, it developed into a recognisable form of government in response to the new urban poor of the Industrial Revolution. It was the Local Government Act 1888 which created 66 county councils, plus a London county council, all run by elected councillors.

Local government today comprises **408 councils** in England and Wales, with almost **21,000 elected councillors**.

What does local government do?

Councils work with local partners and residents to determine and deliver on local priorities. They provide a wide range of services, either directly through their employees or by commissioning services from outside organisations. They largely work within the powers laid down under Acts of Parliament but, since the Local Government Act 2000, they also have responsibility for the economic, social and environmental 'wellbeing' of their area.

Most council services are **mandatory**. This means that the council *must* do them because they are under a duty to do so by law (e.g. to operate an alcohol licensing regime under the Licensing Act 2003). Some mandatory functions are tightly controlled by central government, resulting in a similar level of service across the country (e.g. the administration of housing benefit). Other mandatory requirements (e.g. the library function) leave councils with some discretion over the level and type of service they provide.

Some council services and functions are **discretionary**. These are services a council can choose to provide but does not have to. They are varied, ranging from large economic regeneration projects at one end of the scale, to the removal of wasp nests at the other. The Local Government Act 2003 introduced a general power to charge for discretionary services provided they are not prohibited by other legislation and the council does not make a profit. Councils were already allowed to charge for some discretionary services, including arts and entertainment activities, sport and recreational facilities and some pest control services, under earlier Acts of Parliament.

Councils provide over 700 services.¹ The following table provides a summary of their main services and responsibilities.²

Principal service	Includes
Children's services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools – nursery, primary, secondary and special • Pre-school education • Youth, adult and family and community education • Student support • Children's and families' services – including welfare, fostering and adoption and child protection • Youth centres • Youth justice – secure accommodation and youth offender teams
Highways, roads and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways – non-trunk roads and bridges • Street lighting • Traffic management and road safety • Public transport – discounted travel schemes and local transport co-ordination • Airports, harbours and toll facilities
Adult services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for older people including nursing, home, residential and day care and meals • Services for people with a physical disability, learning disability or mental health need • Asylum seekers • Employment support services
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social housing • Housing benefit and welfare services • Homelessness • Housing strategy
Cultural services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and heritage, including archives and museums and galleries • Recreation and sport, including facilities and sports development • Open spaces – parks and playgrounds, the countryside and allotments • Tourism – visitor information, marketing and tourism development • Libraries and information services

Environmental services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cemetery, cremation and mortuary services • Community safety – including consumer protection, coastal protection and trading standards • Environmental health – including food safety, pollution and pest control, public toilets • Licensing – including alcohol, public entertainment, taxis • Agricultural and fisheries services • Waste collection and disposal, recycling and street cleaning
Planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and development control • Planning policy – including conservation and listed buildings • Environmental initiatives • Economic and community development
Protective services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire and rescue services • Court services such as coroners
Central and other services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local tax collection – council tax and non-domestic rates (business rates) • Registration of births, deaths and marriages • Elections – local and national, including registration of electors • Emergency planning • Local land charges

Each year councils provide 19 million days of care to looked after children – that's 50,000 years' worth of time.

Libraries in England received over 288 million visits and lent over 296 million items in 2006/07 – that's more than five books for every person in the country.

9.1 million tonnes of household waste was recycled in England last year – that's the weight of over 900 Eiffel towers.

Councils choose how to organise their operations based on their responsibilities. For example, **Leicestershire County Council** is organised around five departments³.

Adults and Communities	Social services, home care, protecting adults, carers support, rehabilitation, care homes, supported housing, community meals, libraries, museums, record office and more.
Chief Executive's Department	Democratic services, councillors, council meetings, youth justice, community safety, public relations, trading standards and more.
Children and Young People's Service	Children and family services such as education (including special needs), child protection, youth activities, teenage pregnancy, adoption, fostering and more.
Corporate Resources	Job vacancies, property services, procurement, finance, freedom of information, corporate complaints, pension services, website and more.
Environment and Transport	Construction and maintenance of roads, parking, road safety, recycling campaigns, recycling/waste sites, public transport and environment.

How is local government organised?

The structure of local government varies from area to area. In most of England, there are two tiers – **county** and **district** – with responsibility for council services split between the two tiers.

County councils cover the entire county and provide around 80 per cent of the services in these areas, including schools, social services, public transportation, highways, waste disposal and trading standards. Each **district council** covers a smaller area and provides more local services, including council housing, local planning, recycling and refuse collection and leisure facilities.

Many large towns and cities and some counties have just one level of local government responsible for all local services: the **unitary authority**.

There are five types of local authority in England. These are:

- **county councils** – cover the whole county;
- **district councils** – can be called district, borough or city councils;
- **unitary authorities** – can be called a council (e.g. Medway Council), a city council (e.g. Nottingham City Council) or borough council (e.g. Reading Borough Council);
- **London boroughs** – each of the 33 boroughs is a unitary authority, but the Greater London Authority (GLA) provides London-wide government, including special responsibility for police, fire, strategic planning and transport; and
- **metropolitan districts** – effectively unitary authorities, the name being a relic from past organisational arrangements. They can be called metropolitan borough or city councils.

Currently there are 27 counties split into 201 districts, and 56 unitary authorities in England.⁴ The latest round of English reorganisation became effective in April 2009. 44 local authorities were amalgamated into nine unitary authorities serving a combined population of over 3.2 million.⁵



Who does what?

The table below provides a quick guide to local authority responsibility for major services in England.⁶

	Shire areas			Metropolitan areas	London	
	unitaries	county councils	district councils	metropolitan districts	London boroughs	GLA
Education	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Highways	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Transport planning	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Passenger transport	✓	✓		✓		✓
Social care	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Housing	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Libraries	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Leisure and recreation	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Environmental health	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Waste collection	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Waste disposal	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Planning applications	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Strategic planning	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Local taxation collection	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Town and parish councils

Below the district level, in some parts of England there are town and parish councils, responsible for services such as management of town and village centres, litter, verges, cemeteries, parks, ponds, allotments, war memorials, and community halls. There are around 8,500 such councils in England and Wales and 100,000 councillors. The National Association of Local Councils represents these councils. For more information, visit www.nalc.gov.uk.

Wales

All 22 Welsh councils are unitary authorities providing all local government services to their local communities. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. The WLGA remains a constituent part of the Local Government Association (LGA), ensuring that we continue to represent the interests of Welsh local government to the UK government. For more information about Welsh local government, visit www.wlga.gov.uk.

Scotland

Scotland has had a unitary system of local government since 1996. There are 32 Scottish unitaries and their powers are essentially the same as those of unitary authorities in England. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) is the representative voice of Scottish local government and acts as the employers' association on behalf of all Scottish councils. For more information about Scottish local government, visit www.cosla.gov.uk.

Fire and rescue authorities

Every part of the UK is covered by a local authority fire and rescue service. There are four types of fire authority, each with a different relationship with local authorities:

- **county fire authorities** – effectively departments of the county council with budgets set and controlled by the council. Political membership comes from county council members;
- **combined fire authorities and fire and civil defence authorities** – constitutionally separate authorities covering more than one local authority area. Each council nominates elected members to the fire and rescue authority;
- **London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority** – London has separate arrangements linked to the Greater London Authority (GLA).

The LGA represents 46 fire and rescue authorities in England. For more information, contact fire.policy@lga.gov.uk.

How are decisions made?

Under the Local Government Act 2000, councils may be structured in three different ways:

- **a leader and a cabinet** – local councillors elect a council leader who then appoints a cabinet. Each cabinet member is responsible for a particular sector;
- **an executive mayor and a cabinet** – in some areas the public vote for a mayor who then appoints the cabinet; or
- in areas with populations below 85,000, councils may adapt their older structure of **committees**, each dealing with a separate sector, in which no distinction is made between cabinet and backbenchers.

In all cases, the **sovereign body is the full council meeting** in which all councillors may vote. This body agrees the budget, sets the policy framework, appoints chief officers and makes constitutional decisions. Consequently, the council officers who support councillors work for the whole council, not on behalf of the controlling party, unlike civil servants in central government.



Local government spending and funding

Local government finance is notoriously complex and is worthy of a guide all of its own. Here we try to set out the very basics. If you want to know more, the Department for Communities and Local Government's *Local Government Financial Statistics England*⁷ and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Councillors' Guide to Local Government Finance*⁸ are detailed guides.

Local government accounts for about a quarter of all public spending in the UK. Local government net current expenditure in 2009-10 (excludes capital expenditure) was budgeted to be £115bn. This is divided as follows:

£43bn – education (37 per cent)

£20bn – social care (17 per cent)

£17bn – housing (excluding Housing Revenue Account) (15 per cent)

£14.5bn – police, fire and rescue (13 per cent)

£10.5bn – cultural, environmental and planning (9 per cent)

£6bn – highways and transport (5 per cent)

£4bn – all other services - (4 per cent)

English local government spending in one year is equivalent to the entire GDP of the Ukraine.

The three main sources of income for local government in England are government grants, council tax and redistributed business rates. Local government's 2009-10 budgeted revenue expenditure (not the same as net current expenditure) of £103bn was budgeted to be financed as follows:

£56bn – government grants (54 per cent)

£25bn – council tax (25 per cent)

£19.5bn – redistributed business rates (19 per cent)

Councils also receive income from returns on borrowing and investments, interest and capital receipts, sales, fees and charges and council rents.

Council tax

Council tax makes up the difference between a council's planned budget and its central funding. The government has powers to cap increases it deems excessive. For 2008-09, the government demanded that all increases be substantially below 5 per cent and capped eight authorities.⁹

Spending not wholly-funded by central grant has a disproportionate effect on council tax. Because council tax accounts for only one quarter of local income, a 4 per cent increase in council tax is needed to achieve a 1 per cent increase in total local spending.

Business rates

Councils collect business rates (also called National Non-Domestic Rates) on behalf of central government and pay them into a central account controlled by the Department for Communities and Local Government. These funds are then redistributed back to councils by the department on a per head basis. Councils do not set business rate levels, they are centrally determined.

Who works in local government?

Councils employ around 1.8 million full-time staff in around 600 occupations – that's around 4.5 per cent of the 50 million people of working age (the same as the NHS, often cited as the UK's biggest employer). Worldwide, only Wal-Mart, the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Indian Railways are believed to employ more.¹⁰ Of the 1.8 million council employees:

- 435,000 are teachers;
- 225,000 are police or police support staff;
- 44,000 are firefighters;
- 1.1 million work in all the other local government services – ranging from social workers to librarians, from leisure centre staff to adult carers¹¹.

Spending on employees accounts for approximately half of all local government service spending and is the single largest area of spending for local government.

Councils in England and Wales employ the same number of people as the entire population of Latvia.

How do local elections work?

Councillors are elected for four-year terms. Councils are elected either 'all-up' or 'by thirds'. In 'all-up' councils, there is an election of the whole council every four years. In 'by thirds' councils, one third of councillors are elected in three out of four years. Seven district councils are, unusually, elected by halves.

An individual is eligible to stand as a candidate for the council if they are over 18 years of age, a citizen of Britain, the Commonwealth or European Union and registered to vote or have lived, worked or owned property in the area for at least 12 months prior to the election. Individuals can stand as an independent or as a representative of a political party.

It is not possible to stand for election to the council if you work for that council or another council in a politically restricted post, are bankrupt, have served in prison (including suspended sentences) for three months or more in the five years before the election, or have been otherwise disqualified for corruption or illegality.



Current political balance and recent election results

The balance of power in local government changes frequently due to regular elections and by-elections¹². Following the June 2009 local elections, the political parties' representation in England and Wales was as follows:

- **Conservatives** – controlled 222 councils and had 9,945 councillors;
- **Labour** – controlled 41 councils and had 4,385 councillors;
- **Liberal Democrats** – controlled 27 councils and had 4,280 councillors;
- **'others'** – controlled 10 councils and had 2,304 councillors.

Councillor composition by party in England and Wales – June 2009

Party	Number of councillors	% of total
Conservative	9,945	47.5%
Labour	4,385	21%
Liberal Democrat	4,280	20.5%
Others	2,304	11%

The 2010 local elections were held on Thursday 6 May. Direct elections took place in all 32 London boroughs, all 36 metropolitan boroughs, 78 shire district councils, 19 unitary authorities and various mayoral posts, all in England. The results were not available at time of print.

The 2011 local elections will be held on Thursday 5 May in 279 English local authorities:¹³

- 49** unitary authorities (29 all-up and 20 by thirds);
- 36** metropolitan boroughs (all by thirds);
- 194** shire district councils (123 all-up and 71 by thirds).

What is the LGA Group?

In 1997, local government created the Local Government Association (LGA) to be its national voice in England and Wales. As a politician-led membership body, the LGA lobbies and campaigns for changes in policy and legislation on behalf of its member councils and the people and communities they serve.

The 424 authorities which make up the LGA cover every part of England and Wales and include county and district councils, metropolitan and unitary councils, London boroughs, Welsh unitary councils, fire, police, national park and passenger transport authorities. Together they represent over 50 million people and spend around £115bn a year on local services.

The LGA Group's ambition is to make an outstanding contribution to the success of local government. We are working for:

- a new world of responsibility, choice and local control with **public services redesigned and reshaped around the needs of local places and local people** so that they can take responsibility for improving their own lives;
- a shift in the balance of power away from central government to local government, with **accountability for public services transferred to the local level**, along with a reduction in the burden of central bureaucracy;
- **stronger, more powerful local government**, with councils and elected councillors providing leadership at the centre of new local governance arrangements;
- **local public service providers to be freed up from unnecessary controls** so that they can develop tailored responses appropriate to the challenges of their communities;
- **local people able to make informed judgements and choices about local services**, with the information and ability to challenge those who provide public services on their behalf; and
- councils working in fundamentally different ways with their partners to provide **more responsive, more efficient and more innovative public services in a world of tighter public finance**.

These ambitions are shared by the six associate organisations that together make up the LGA Group.

Local Government Association (LGA)

The LGA is a cross-party politically-led member association. Working with its member councils, the LGA:

- supports councils and their partnerships to continuously improve and be innovative;
- initiates policy and debate about policy, based on the real experiences of councils and the communities they serve;
- lobbies for changes in policy and legislation on the issues that matter most to councils; and
- works to build a strong and positive reputation for local government nationally and with the public.

How is the LGA organised?

The LGA has **four political group offices**, each with elected leaders; Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent. Whilst a founding principle of the Association is the recognition of the right of each group to establish its own position, the role of the group leaders is to seek to work to a consensus wherever possible.

The **LGA chairman** is elected by the political group that has the largest councillor representation in local government and is the Association's principal political spokesperson.

Together the chairman and group leaders provide the political leadership and direction on which the Association's activities are built. The LGA's chief executive is accountable to them and they are also responsible for appointments to the most senior Association positions.

The **LGA executive** consists solely of elected councillors and provides strategic direction to the work of the Association. Its membership includes the chairman, vice chairs and deputy chairs of the LGA, the chairs of the LGA's policy boards and additional members to achieve political proportionality based on the parties' representation in councils.

Seven **policy boards** of elected councillors provide strategic direction for the high priority projects in the LGA business plan and co-ordinate policy and direct lobbying activities in their areas of responsibility. The seven boards are: Children and Young People; Community Wellbeing; Culture, Tourism and Sport; Environment; Improvement; Regeneration and Transport; and Safer Communities.

The LGA is funded through a mixture of member subscriptions, income from conferences and advertising and some grant funding. In 2009/10, its sources of income were:

£20.2m – conferences and advertising;

£14.1m – subscriptions;

£2.7m – grant funding (for some of the work of the LGA's European and International Unit and Analysis and Research);

£300,000 – other income.

For more information, visit www.lga.gov.uk

Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA)

The IDeA supports improvement and innovation in local government, focussing on the issues that are important to councils and using tried and tested ways of working. Councillors in key positions are supported and developed through leadership programmes, and councils are offered support through peer reviews and peer mentoring. A national good practice website covers more than 50 areas of local government improvement and is updated daily, sharing up-to-date information and best practice.

The IDeA is funded through a mixture of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), other central government grants and conference and advertising revenue. In 2009/10, its sources of income were:

£25.3m – Revenue Support Grant;

£12.8m – other grants;

£9.0m – other income (including conferences and advertising);

£469,000 – Welsh Revenue Support Grant.

For more information, visit www.idea.gov.uk

Local Government Employers (LGE)

LGE works in partnership with local authorities, regional employers and other bodies on pay, pensions and employment contract issues. LGE offers advice and guidance on employment-related subjects, and represents local government employer interests to central government, government agencies, trades unions and European institutions. LGE supports the employers' sides of the national negotiating bodies and provides advice and support for councils implementing national pay and conditions agreements. LGE also offers technical advice, information and training on the Local Government Pension Scheme and related matters.

LGE is funded through a mixture of the Revenue Support Grant and conference and advertising revenue. In 2009/10, its sources of income were:

£3.6m – Revenue Support Grant;

£2.2m – other income (including conferences and advertising);

£1.5m – other funding (for provision of specific secretariat services);

£469,000 – Welsh Revenue Support Grant.

For more information, visit www.lge.gov.uk

Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS)

LACORS promotes quality regulation in the areas of alcohol etc licensing and gambling, animal health and welfare, environmental protection and streetscene, food safety, hygiene and standards, health and safety enforcement, private sector housing, taxi licensing and trading standards. LACORS lobbies for, and offers comprehensive advice, guidance and good practice to, councils and their partners on issues that affect local people and services.

LACORS is funded from the Revenue Support Grant and from the local government bodies for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In 2009/10, its sources of income were:

£2.1m – Revenue Support Grant;

£98,075 – Welsh Local Government Association;

£54,123 – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities;

£41,032 – Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

For more information, visit www.lacors.gov.uk

Leadership Centre for Local Government

The Leadership Centre for Local Government works with leading councillors and future leaders in councils and in Local Strategic Partnerships (see p.23) to develop their skills and qualities to be effective leaders and fundamentally transform their communities for the better.

The Centre's Leeds Castle Leadership Programme is uniquely designed for both leaders and chief executives, while up-and-coming councillors have the opportunity to participate in its Next Generation programme – run in the party tradition of each of the four LGA political groups.

The Leadership Centre is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. It received £2 million in 2009/10.

For more information, visit www.localleadership.gov.uk

Local Partnerships

Local Partnerships work alongside local public bodies to improve their sourcing and commissioning skills, programme and project management capabilities, procurement, negotiating and contract management capacity, and their delivery, funding and partnering abilities.

Local Partnerships is owned equally by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Partnerships UK (PUK). Partnerships UK is 49 per cent owned by HM Treasury and the Scottish Executive. Local Partnerships receives funding through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) solely to meet the costs of support provided free of charge to local authorities. RSG-funded services are provided on a non-profit basis.

For more information, visit www.localpartnerships.org.uk

LGA Group priorities for 2010 /11

Each year, the LGA Group reviews its plans and programmes to ensure that they reflect those issues that are most important to councils. The LGA Group **business plan** for 2010/11 sets out five priorities:

- **reputation** – building and maintaining the national and local reputation of councils;
- **innovation and value for money** – supporting councils to achieve greater local efficiency and effectiveness;
- **local democracy** – ensuring that councils are at the forefront of greater local decision-making on spending priorities and leading improvement work across the sector;
- **economy** – supporting councils to lead their communities to prosperity in the economic recovery; and
- **customer service** – ensuring that the LGA Group enhances the reputation of local government and delivers value for money.

The Group is also undertaking a major change programme, called Getting Closer, which aims to make it more effective and deliver greater value for money. Steps taken so far have enabled the LGA to reduce expenditure by 10 per cent in 2009/10 and to freeze subscriptions for all but the smallest councils, whose subscriptions were reduced. Equally, it has enabled our other associate bodies to continue to deliver high-quality services while facing a cash freeze in central government funding for the past five years.

Five issues affecting local government

Local government covers so many different issues that it is impossible to do justice to them in this short guide. We have picked just five current issues to give you an insight into the changes that the LGA Group wants to achieve.

Adult social care

There is a broad consensus that demographic changes mean that the adult social care system is in desperate need of reform. The LGA agrees that insufficient funding, growing demand and escalating costs mean that the current system is not fit for the demands of the future. In our policy publication, *Fit for the future*¹⁴, we set out detailed proposals, including:

- **a minimum level of support available to all** – including information, advice and advocacy; benefits support; adaptations and equipment; reablement and technology;
- **a single, transferable assessment of needs and means recognised in every part of the country** with services and funding decisions to meet those needs decided locally with the individual to reflect personal preferences and local resources; and
- **a realistic and sustainable funding solution** that considers how best to align all resources, including NHS spend.

Assessment, inspection and central regulation

The costs of the current national arrangements for performance management, upwards reporting, and inspection and regulation of local public services are disproportionate compared with other countries. It has been estimated that the cost of monitoring and inspecting local government alone is in the region of £2bn per year. The LGA has published ambitious proposals for a new local accountability framework in its *Freedom to lead* policy report.¹⁵ Key elements include:

- **councils providing democratic accountability for a wider range of locally-delivered public services** – including devolved autonomy to shape all local public sector spending;
- **a radically reduced set of national outcomes and indicators** – allowing more flexibility to pursue local priorities;
- **reform of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) mechanism** so that it becomes a means of agreeing priorities with local communities – not government;
- **strengthened local accountability** – with regular performance information for local people;
- **greater emphasis on local self-evaluation** and robust peer challenge; and
- **axing the multiple systems of inspection, assessment and regulation** and moving towards a single assessment process.

Housing

Waiting lists for social housing are expected to hit five million by the end of this year. The LGA has set out practical proposals for reform of council housing finance that would allow councils to build 80,000-90,000 new homes in the next five years and provide an investment of £35bn into the English economy.¹⁶ We seek the abolition of the broken Housing Revenue Account subsidy system and financial independence for council landlords. The LGA is also campaigning for:

- **councils to be able to keep all the money raised through rent and sales of all council-owned housing** to reinvest in meeting the housing needs of their communities;
- **councils to borrow against future rental income** to invest in new housing more easily;
- **reduced bureaucracy and simplified bidding and contractual processes** for councils to access grant funding; and
- **councils to be able to access mainstream funding for house building** on the same basis as housing associations and private developers.

Local democracy and devolution

There is a crisis of confidence in democratic institutions in the aftermath of the Parliamentary expenses controversy. The LGA argues that giving people more influence over decision-making through the local ballot box will help to rebuild public confidence. We advocate a range of proposals to support local innovation and initiative and increase local accountability, including:¹⁷

- **the creation of a power of general competence for local government;**
- **the devolution of decision-making powers affecting local economies** – decisions about housing and planning, transport, welfare and skills and economic development – to groups of councils who want to work together in partnerships, with funding also devolved from national and regional agencies; and
- **a rolling back of the quango state** to give voters more influence over how their money gets spent by government at all levels.

Local government finance, efficiencies and Total Place

There are going to be large pressures on public spending over the coming years. Councils have already proved themselves the most efficient part of the public sector. They beat their 2004-07 efficiency savings target of £3bn by £1.3bn, and a further £1.7bn was saved in 2008-09 alone. The LGA believes further significant savings can be made by simplifying how public services work.¹⁸

Total Place is a project to find ways to make public services better for people at a lower cost by doing things differently. 13 pilot areas have investigated how much public money is spent in their place and then explored the finances in detail on a particular theme, such as drug and alcohol abuse, to see how this money could be spent more effectively. The LGA Group is working to support the pilots, spread the results and lobby for changes as a result of the evidence. The findings of the pilots are already pointing to:¹⁹

- **funding being allocated by place, need and priority**, rather than be institutionally or initiative driven;
- **a massive reduction in the ring-fencing of money**, together with the report writing that goes with it;
- **public service organisations need to redesign their services** around the needs of the people who use them; and
- **a single performance framework across all the public services in any one place** which focusses on outcomes.

How the LGA Group can help you

The LGA Group public affairs and campaigns team is ready to help Parliamentarians and their staff with all aspects of their work.

Parliamentary work

Local issues often dominate the Parliamentary agenda. Whether it's debates in the Lords, Commons or Westminster Hall, oral and written questions, Select Committee inquiries or a Bill that requires careful scrutiny, the LGA Group has experienced experts who can help you. For example:

- **debates** – adjournment, general and Westminster Hall debates are fantastic ways of highlighting constituency concerns. We can provide in-depth briefings on local issues and help with research, council case studies and even advice on Parliamentary procedure. We have previously helped MPs and peers wanting to speak in debates on many diverse issues - from promoting apprenticeships to preventing domestic violence;
- **legislation** – we can help with preparations for Second Reading debates on a Bill or making amendments to help improve legislation during the Bill's passage. We produce Parliamentary briefings for all key Bills affecting local government. We also work closely with MPs and peers to help them draft amendments on behalf of local government. In addition, we can provide detailed speaking notes which highlight the necessity of the amendments and offer valuable case studies, facts and figures to illustrate the issues;

- **Parliamentary questions** – oral and written questions can be used to raise constituents’ concerns, highlight local issues and obtain information that is useful when campaigning in the constituency, pulling together speaking notes, or making a political point. We can help to draft written and oral Parliamentary questions and provide supplementary questions and briefing notes to help back up oral and written questions. We have also provided shadow ministers and government backbenchers with questions to ask the Prime Minister on issues that matter in their local area.

Case work

The first point of call for casework will usually be the local council or local councillor. We can help to identify the best department to contact. We also have factual information on many complex issues that could help with responses to constituents’ concerns.

Events

We organise a number of conferences, debates and policy discussions that can provide a platform for Parliamentarians and encourage engagement with councillors and expert practitioners. For example, many MPs and peers have participated in our Smith Square series of debates which are attended by councillors, council officers and stakeholder organisations.



local government acronyms explained

AEF = Aggregate External Finance – total amount of money given by central government to local government.

ABG = Area Based Grant – a general non ring-fenced grant allocated by central government directly to councils' additional revenue funding.

BID = Business Improvement District – area within which local businesses agree through a local ballot to pay an additional charge on their business rates to fund local regeneration.

CAA = Comprehensive Area Assessment – the inspection framework for local public services in England.

CAF = Common Assessment Framework – standardised approach to conducting an assessment of a child's additional needs used by children's services practitioners.

CDRP = Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership – a multi-agency group set up in law, consisting of the council, police and other local agencies, to tackle crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour.

DSG = Dedicated Schools Grant – a ring-fenced grant that is the principal source of funding for schools and related activities in England.

GLA = Greater London Authority – consists of an elected mayor and a separately-elected London Assembly of 25 members.

HRA = Housing Revenue Account – an account showing the income and expenditure incurred in the provision and maintenance of the council's housing stock, that councils have to maintain by law.

LAA = Local Area Agreement – three year action plans developed by first-tier (county or unitary) local authorities with their partners in local strategic partnerships (see LSP) to improve local services.

LDF = Local Development Framework – collection of local development documents produced by the local planning authority which collectively form the spatial planning strategy for its area.

LSP = Local Strategic Partnership – non-statutory body bringing together the different parts of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to work at a local level with the local council in the lead role.

MAA = Multi-Area Agreements – voluntary agreements between two or more top-tier local authorities, their partners and government to achieve collective targets to improve economic prosperity.

NNDR = National Non-Domestic Rates – also called business rates, they are collected from businesses by councils, pooled by central government and redistributed to councils by formula.

NIS = National Indicator Set – the 198 indicators by which central government measures and manages the performance of local government.

RDA = Regional Development Agency – regional quangos with a remit to promote sustainable economic development. Produce a Regional Economic Strategy outlining the planned economic development and regeneration of the respective region.

RIEP = Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships – local government-led regional ‘centres of excellence’ aimed at spreading good practice. There are nine RIEPs in the UK.

RSG = Revenue Support Grant – one of three components of the Formula Grant from central to local government.

SCS = Sustainable Community Strategy – prepared by Local Strategic Partnerships (see LSPs) as a set of goals and actions which they wish to promote. Informs the Local Development Framework (see LDF) and acts as an umbrella for all other strategies devised for the area.

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- 19 For more information on Total Place, visit www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/

For further information please contact
the Local Government Association at:
Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

or telephone LGconnect, for all your LGA
queries on 020 7664 3131
Fax: 020 7664 3030
Email: info@lga.gov.uk
Web: www.lga.gov.uk

For a copy in Braille, in larger print
or audio tape, contact LGconnect



Local Government Association

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 400 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.

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