

ANNUAL REPORT 2025 LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



Cover image: At the time of going to press, the Liberal Democrats have the leadership of 75 councils and deputy leadership of another 14 councils in England and Wales, making 89 in total.

Liberal Democrats moved from being the leading party to having overall control of Cambridgeshire



Liberal Democrats gained more seats on Buckinghamshire Council

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www.libdemgroup.lga.gov.uk/lga-lib-dem-group

A message from the **Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group**



Councillor Joe Harris
Leader of the LGA
Liberal Democrat Group

Welcome to our 2024/25 Annual Report. This May saw yet more Lib Dem Councillors elected, 370 wins with a net gain of 163 – our seventh year in a row that we have increased our numbers.

We now have a Lib Dem majority on 40 councils. If you add in Lib Dem council leaders either as minority control or part of an alliance or coalition arrangement, then we lead 75 councils. There are more Lib Dem council leaders than there are Lib Dem MPs. Across the country we have over 3,200 Lib Dem councillors, working hard to make a difference in their communities.

Keeping in touch with our councillors

We continue to keep in touch with Liberal Democrat councillors in a number of ways – paying some of our council groups a visit; sending a regular weekly email to all Lib Dem councillors; holding regular on-line meetings for Lib Dem council leaders (we will soon re-start the opposition leaders meetings too).

In addition to this we hold a number of fringe meetings at Lib Dem and LGA Conferences and often provide bespoke advice on a wide range of issues to Lib Dem councillors seeking support.

Working with the wider party

We were delighted to hold a reception at the LGA offices in London at the start of September 2024 to congratulate our then newly elected MPs on their success – and it’s been so good to see 72 of them on the green benches in the Commons, helping us fight for local government along with our excellent local government team in the House of Lords.

We work with our local government partners in the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC) to deliver a range of training programmes and support – including the annual councillors’ weekend and our presence at party conferences. In addition to that we fund ALDC to deliver the very popular Next Generation and the Be a Councillor programs.

I continue to meet with Ed Davey, Lord Pack – the party’s President, and CEO, Mike Dixon, to raise issues of concern from Lib Dem councillors and to make sure the party keeps in touch with its local government base.

Lobbying for local government

As you would expect we work on a cross-party basis to lobby central government on behalf of councils, for example lobbying on Parliamentary Bills and other government consultations and support the wider LGA when it holds events in parliament. Our leading Lib Dem councillors on LGA Boards will sometimes be asked to present evidence to parliamentary select committees.

Thank you!

I’d like to thank all our elected members who serve on our boards, panels and committees, making sure we have a strong Lib Dem input into the work of the LGA over the past two years. Their reports are in this publication.

Since the last annual report, our Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board lead Lib Dem member, Vikki Slade, stood down because she was one of our 72 MPs elected in 2024, with Cllr Victor Chamberlain stepping up into her place at the LGA.

Our congratulations to Vikki and thanks for her hard work leading the Lib Dems on this Board. We continue to work closely with Vikki as she is the Lib Dem Spokesperson in the Commons on Communities and Local Government. As part of the Local Government Lib Dem team in Parliament, she works alongside Gideon Amos MP (our Housing and Planning lead) and our Lords who have a strong interest in local government. This year also saw Jerry Roodhouse step back as our lead on the County Councils Network, thank you Jerry for your work and welcome to Lucy Nethsingha who is now the lead member.

I would like to especially thank Chris White for many years of service to local government and especially to Liberal Democrats in local government, following his decision to stand down from his council in May 2025. His experience and advice have been greatly appreciated by myself and the group over the years.

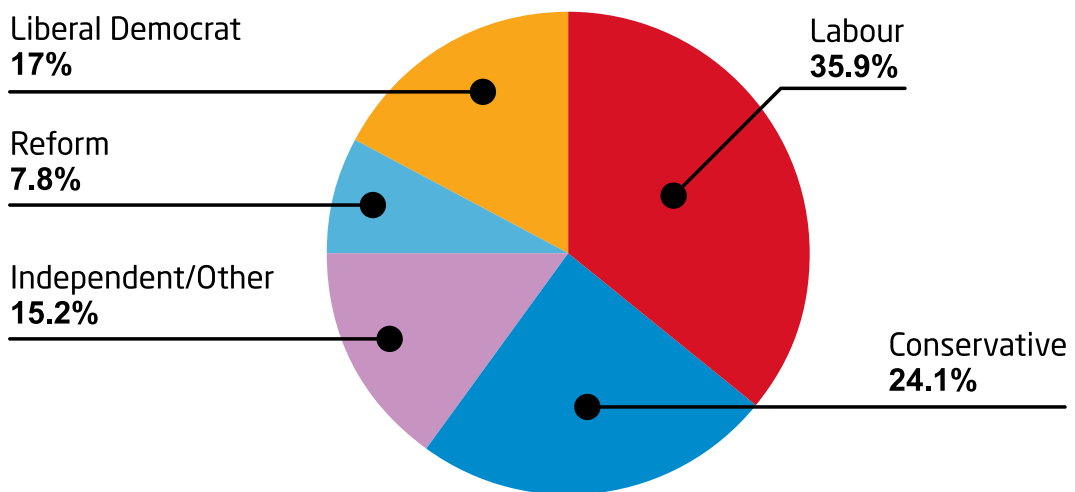
And lastly, I would like to say a big thank you to Terry, Rob, Colin and formerly Ryan who left us this year to work for one of our MPs in the LGA Liberal Democrat Office for all their hard work over the year.

Political balance 2025/2026 of the LGA

As a cross-party membership organisation, the LGA's governance is determined by its five political groups. Following the local elections each year, Plymouth University's Elections Centre calculates the proportionality figures using a formula that takes account of the number of council seats held by each group and the population and type of authority that they represent. No other party has enough of a share at the LGA to meet the five per cent threshold to qualify for group status, so they continue to sit with the Independent Group.

This year sees the establishment of a Reform Group at the LGA as they qualified due to having a vote share above the 5 per cent barrier.

The Liberal Democrat Group once again gained in vote share and we remain the third group at the LGA.



The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leadership Team



Group Leader

Cllr Joe Harris

Cotswold DC and Gloucestershire CC
joe.harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk



Group Deputy Leader

Cllr Bridget Smith

South Cambridgeshire DC
cllr.bridgetsmith@scamb.gov.uk



Group Chair

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (Lead)

Cambridgeshire CC
lucynethsingha@icloud.com



National Lead Peer

Cllr Alan Connett

Devon CC
alan.connett@btinternet.com



Group Whip

Cllr Heather Kidd MBE

Shropshire Council
heather.kidd@shropshire.gov.uk

LGA Liberal Democrat Board members 2023/2025

Liberal Democrat Group Executive and Board Members 2023/2025

Children and Young People



Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (lead)
Portsmouth City Council
geraldvj@gmail.com



Cllr Cordelia Law
Torbay Council
cordelia.law@torbay.gov.uk



Cllr Mark Cory
Colchester City Council and Essex CC
mark.cory@colchester.gov.uk



Cllr Dine Romero (sub)
Bath & North East Somerset Council
dine_romero@bathnes.gov.uk

City Regions



Cllr Gareth Roberts (lead)
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
cllr.groberts@richmond.gov.uk



Cllr Mike Ross
Hull City Council
councillor.ross@hullcc.gov.uk



Cllr Mark Jeffery (sub)
Portsmouth City Council
cllr.mark.jeffery@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Community Wellbeing



Cllr Sarah Osborne (lead)
East Sussex County Council
sarahosborne2000@yahoo.co.uk



Cllr Mike Bell
North Somerset Council
mike.bell@n-somerset.gov.uk



Cllr Wendy Taylor
Newcastle City Council
wendy.taylor@ncl-libdems.org.uk



Cllr Stewart Golton (sub)
Leeds City Council
stewart.golton@leeds.gov.uk

Culture, Tourism and Sport



Cllr Liz Green (lead)
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
liz.green@kingston.gov.uk



Cllr Darryl Smalley
City of York Council
cllr.dsmalley@york.gov.uk



Cllr Chris White
St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire CC
chris.white.stalbans@gmail.com



Cllr Amanda Hopgood (sub)
Durham Council
amanda.hopgood@durham.gov.uk

Local Infrastructure and Net Zero



Cllr Victor Chamberlain
London Borough of Southwark
victor.chamberlain@southwark.gov.uk



Cllr Paula Widdowson
City of York Council
cllr.pwiddowson@york.gov.uk



Cllr Roger Hayes (sub)
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
roger.hayes@kingston.gov.uk



Cllr Carl Cashman (sub)
Liverpool City Council
carl.cashman@liverpool.gov.uk



Cllr Ruth Brown (sub)
North Hertfordshire Council
ruth.brown@north-herts.gov.uk
(Note: Vikki Slade MP was lead member until August 2024)

Fire Services



Cllr Carolyn Lambert (lead)

East Sussex County Council
cllr.carolyn.lambert@eastsussex.gov.uk



Cllr Roger Price

Hampshire County Council
roger.price@hants.gov.uk

Improvement and Innovation



Cllr Tim Pickstone

Cumberland Council
tim.pickstone@cumberland.gov.uk



Cllr Peter Taylor

Watford Borough Council
peter.taylor@watford.gov.uk



Cllr Mike Evely

Cotswold District Council
mike.evely@cotswold.gov.uk



Cllr Paul Crossley (sub)

Bath and NE Somerset Council
paul.n.crossley@btinternet.com

People and Places



Cllr Caroline Leaver (lead)

North Devon and Devon CC
caroline.ndlibdems@gmail.com



Cllr Emily Smith

Vale of White Horse District Council
emily.smith@whitehorsedc.gov.uk



Cllr Michael Mullaney

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
michael.mullaney@hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk



Cllr Alex Wagner

Shropshire Council
alex.wagner@shropshire.gov.uk



Cllr Leigh Frost (sub)

Cornwall Council
cllr.leigh.frost@cornwall.gov.uk



Cllr Helen Belcher (sub)

Wiltshire Council
helen.belcher@wiltshire.gov.uk

Economy and Resources



Cllr Keith House (lead)

Eastleigh Borough Council and Hampshire County Council
keith.house@eastleigh.gov.uk



Cllr Lucy Nethsingha

Cambridgeshire CC
lucynethsingha@icloud.com



Cllr Michael Headley

Bedford Council
michael@mheadley.co.uk



Cllr Alec Sandiford (sub)

Stafford Borough Council
asandiford@staffordbc.gov.uk

Safer and Stronger Communities



Cllr Heather Kidd (lead)

Shropshire Council
heather.kidd@shropshire.gov.uk



Cllr Jon Ball

London Borough of Ealing
jonball@cix.co.uk



Cllr Jake Short

London Borough of Sutton
jake.short@sutton.gov.uk



Cllr Jacqui Taylor (sub)

St Albans City & District Council
cllr.j.taylor@councillor.stalbans.gov.uk



Cllr Marjory Millum (sub)

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
cllr.m.millum@richmond.gov.uk

District Councils Network



Cllr Bridget Smith

South Cambs District Council
cllr.bridgetsmith@scambs.gov.uk

County Councils Network



Cllr Lucy Nethsingha

Cambridgeshire
lucynethsingha@icloud.com

(Note: Cllr Jerry Roodhouse was lead member until October 2024)

Congress of European Municipalities and Regions and International



Cllr Flo Clucas OBE
Cheltenham Borough Council
flo.clucas@btinternet.com

Federal Board rep



Cllr Simon McGrath
London Borough of Merton
simon.mcgrath@merton.gov.uk
(Note: Cllr Chris White OBE was Federal Board rep until May 2025)

FPC reps



Cllr Lucy Nethsingha
Cambridgeshire CC and Cambridge City Council
lucynethsingha@icloud.com



Cllr Susan Juned
Stratford Upon Avon District Council
susan.juned@stratford-dc.gov.uk

LGA Commercial Advisory Board



Cllr David Neighbour
Hart District Council
neighbod@aol.com

Audit Committee (until September 2024) and Local Partnerships



Cllr Howard Sykes MBE
Oldham Council
howard.sykes@oldham.gov.uk

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (From September 2024)



Cllr Paul Smith
Colchester Borough Council
paul.e.smith@colchester.gov.uk

Liberal Democrat Vice Presidents of the LGA

Every year the four political groups at the LGA invite parliamentary representatives from the House of Commons and House of Lords to be our Vice Presidents. They support the LGA in Parliament – helping to raise our concerns in Parliament and from time-to-time hosting events, The current list of Liberal Democrat Vice Presidents is below and we thank them all for their support:

Baroness Bakewell

Baroness Brinton

Baroness Pinnock

Baroness Caroline Pidgeon

Baroness Thornhill

Daisy Cooper MP

Helen Morgan MP

Layla Moran MP

Tim Farron MP

Vikki Slade MP

Pippa Heylings MP

Lisa Smart MP

Lord Scriven

Lord Shipley

Lord Storey

Lord Tope

Many thanks to those Vice Presidents who stepped back from this role in 2025 but who we continue to work closely with:

Sir Ed Davey MP, Baroness Barbara Janke, Baroness Scott of Needham Market, Wera Hobhouse MP.

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Children and Young People Board

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson



When anyone talks about Children's Services and Education in local government they often roll their eyes and think of budget overspends.

That is the reality in many many councils. Overspends in looking after children in care. Overspends in SEND provision, overspends in home to school transport.

But this reflects the reality of huge pressures on services and the Government failing to provide the funding to be able to provide the services people need. It also fails to recognise both the huge work councils put in, the excellent service many councils provide and the other services – like the youth service – which are also vital to local communities.

The Lib Dem team on the CYP Board all bring different skills and expertise. I come from a social services background. Cordelia Law from Torbay is an education expert, Mark Cory from Colchester is a teacher and Dine Romero from Bath is a wonderful sub covering all of us when we can't get to meetings.

But we have an impact. Research says the action that would have the biggest effect on reducing child poverty would be removing the two child benefit cap. We forced a vote at the Board, and got a unanimous vote that the two child benefit cap should go. Ever since the LGA has been working hard to make sure no one is told of this decision as they think of it as the Labour Local Government Association.

It's not all about politics. The Board has worked cross party on the huge rise in the number of children with Special Educational needs and the vast pressures this puts on ever reducing budgets. The current system is just unsustainable. Either the Government will need to find more funding, or eligibility criteria will need to be tightened – or councils will go bust. There are no easy or painless outcomes and the Board wis working with the Government to try to get to a sensible outcome. Without help from Government many councils do face bankruptcy.

The Board is also working with councils facing the huge costs of some social services placements. Costs of £1m a year per child are no longer unheard of. Ministers in the previous Government refused to take any action on excess profits in the private sector providing placements. Now Ministers in the new Government are prepared to look at this. But councils are also banding together to look at the ways they could jointly provide placements so we are not held to ransom by the private sector.

There have been other useful areas of work such as on mental health services for children and young people, getting Ofsted to inspect academy chains, youth provision and affects of the role out of free child care places.

My thanks to all members of the Lib Dem team on Children and Young People's Board and to the support we have received from Ryan and Colin in the Lib Dem office, you have been great.

geraldvj@gmail.com

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

LGA Liberal Democrat Group Whip

Councillor Heather Kidd



Tithing reminder

Liberal Democrats council groups should, have ensured their members are contributing 10 per cent gross from Basic and Special Responsibility allowances. This is particularly relevant post the May 2024 and now the May 2025 council elections.

Group contract

As a reminder the Group contract was introduced several years ago, setting out the expectations of all those who hold Group offices or serve on the various LGA boards, panels and related organisations. It was updated last in 2023, giving improved clarity on the responsibilities. Following the 2023 Group elections, all those elected to Group positions are expected to sign and observe the Group contract and for 2025 and for all following elections.

Council group Standing Orders were updated in 2022. Many council groups have now updated theirs to reflect these. All groups need to review theirs and the Council Group Toolkit which includes updated model standing orders is available on the ALDC website.

LGA Lib Dem Group update

Thank you to those who have stepped up to fill places on LGA Boards and Committees over the past year – including Amanda Hopgood who joined the LGA Board as the third Lib Dem member; substitute members Carl Cashman and Ruth Brown on the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero board following Vikki Slade’s election to parliament; also substitutes Leigh Frost and Helen Belcher on the People and Places Board, thank you Roger Price for agreeing to take the Lib Dem group’s second place on Fire Services and welcome to Paul Smith who takes the Lib Dem place on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Many thanks to Howard Sykes for his service on Audit Committee until September 2024.

Reports and attendance

A summary of attendance of board members is included within this report. The report format was standardised a few years ago and aids in helping lead members give a brief summary of their work on the Boards in each cycle. I am grateful that these have mostly arrived on time.

Attendance in person is to be encouraged at least for the induction session and at least once or twice a year. Group working for the Group Executive will be improved if this happens. All meetings will remain hybrid.

Thank you all for your support this year.

Heather Kidd

heather.kidd@shropshire.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Community Wellbeing Board

Councillor Sarah Osborne



Adult Social Care

Unfortunately, it looks like it will still be a long wait for much needed reforms and most importantly adequate and sustainable funding for adult social care. The Casey Commission (the Government instigated independent commission into the future of ASC) will work to two phases.

Phase one to report in 2026 with a plan for how to implement a National Care Service over ten years. Phase two will report by 2028 with longer-term recommendations for the transformation of adult social care.

I had a very useful meeting with Lib Dem portfolio (and shadow) holders at the National Adult and Children's services conference in Liverpool and it was heartening to hear how some councils still deliver excellent services in this difficult climate.

Public Health

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill had its second reading in the House of Lords and the Bill will now move to committee stage. From Sunday 1 June 2025 legislation comes into force meaning it will be illegal to sell, supply and purchase disposable vapes.

I chaired a well-attended session on Tackling Teenage Pregnancy at the Annual Public Health Conference.

I also meet regularly with the CYP Board, and we are now working alongside the People and Places and City Regions Boards on Economic Inactivity and Health as well.

Supporting Unpaid Carers

Lead members agreed that the LGA should develop some focussed policy lines on Unpaid Carers including six main recommendations.

1. The LGA to support a National Carers Strategy. We want to see a big focus on unpaid carers in the Casey Commission on social care. The strategy should reflect the ageing population and rise in complex needs of people living in the community. It should be all-ages and reflect specific needs of young carers and parent carers.
2. Ask Government to research and address gaps in Parent/carer support and young carers. To strengthen efforts to ensure that parent-carers are assessed and supported, particularly as the child transitions between child and adult services.
3. The LGA formally support the “No Wrong Doors for Young Carers” initiative.
4. Enable/support improved Data Sharing Across Systems.
5. Improve Carers benefits and rights so that carers are not charged for earnings related overpayments if they go over the current weekly earnings limit and support two weeks paid carers leave.
6. LGA to support Carers to be given ‘protected characteristic’ status.

Update on Health Reform

The 10-year plan for health is expected to be published in June or July. The LGA submitted a response based on the discussion led by the Community Wellbeing Board.

In March it was announced that NHS England would be abolished with management of the healthcare service being brought back into democratic control. A programme board has been established to oversee the transition and transformation process which will aim to reduce the total combined NHSE and Department for Health and Social Care workforce by 50 per cent.

In mid-March, Integrated Care Boards (ICB) Chief Executives were instructed to reduce running costs by 50 per cent.

As always, the Lib Dem office team have been a great support.

sarahosborne2000@yahoo.co.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

Councillor Liz Green



So 24/25 has been an interesting year in the world of culture, tourism and sport. Between my writing last year's report and it being available in July – the Conservative Government's Physical Activity Tasforce was, obviously, no more! Which is a shame as it had the potential to be useful. I've still yet to meet

the Labour DCMS Secretary of State, Lisa Nandy, despite trying, although I did attend an APPG on sport and physical activity.

I attend weekly meetings of the Lib Dem Parliamentary DCMS & DSIT team to keep connected to their workplan and feed in local government views. In January, I hosted the councillor session, with 15 Lib Dem councillors from across the country. We discussed various topics to help our parliamentarians understand our concerns. Parliamentarians can help by asking questions of the Government, so do get in touch with them.

I mentioned last year that the LGA had done a series of Cultural Devolution Think Pieces. Seven leading figures wrote the pieces, and given the Government LGR and Devo plans they are probably more relevant than ever – if you haven't seen them they are worth a read at the LGA website – just search for 'think pieces'.

I'd also like to direct you to the LGA's Routemaps to Sustainability – last year both Cultural Services and Leisure Services were covered. They have a wealth of information, ideas and case studies on how to make these services more environmentally sustainable. Again search 'routemap' on the LGA website.

One of the board's key pieces of work is the publishing of evidence. This year it was the results of our call for evidence on two areas – increasing activity in women and girls (4 in 10 are not physically active enough to reap the full health benefits) and helping children and young people be more active (over half of children do not meet the recommended guidelines on activity levels). The impact of being able to change these statistics is quite clear, which is why it is disappointing that the Government does not seem to be making this a priority. Search the CTS section of the LGA website.

I know I seem to be sending you to lots of links in this report, but the work the board and I do is more about helping councils to navigate the options in this area. CTS is front facing, but not as obvious as bins and potholes. Services are mostly not statutory, but residents will mount campaigns if you withdraw them. They can make a huge difference in a person's physical and mental wellbeing, but are often pushed out by 'money demanding acute services'. If you want to see some good examples of where councils have pushed through these problems and come up with solutions in the fields of arts, culture, libraries, museums, sports, parks, tourism, heritage, physical activity – have a look at the website and think about how your council can work smarter in these areas.

And if you want more, then there are Leadership Essentials courses on Cultural Services and Sport and Physical Activity, officer training in visitor economy, culture and library services and culture and library peer challenges for councils. And come to our conference in Bradford on 11th September 2025 – Culture, Tourism and Sport – adding value in times of change.

liz.green@kingston.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board

Councillor Victor Chamberlain



The past year has been a crucial one for the LINZ Board, as we have focused on shaping policy responses to the new government's evolving approach to housing, planning, devolution, transport and climate change. As Liberal Democrats on the Board, we've played an active role in championing progressive and community-focused solutions – rooted in sustainability, fairness, and local empowerment. I'm also delighted to have stepped up as the Deputy Chair following Vikki Slade's election as MP and in delighted to be able to continue to work with Vikki in her new role as HCLG spokesperson. I'm especially grateful to my fellow Liberal Democrat colleagues – Cllr Paula Widdowson and Cllr Roger Hayes, and Cllr Ruth Brown (sub) and Cllr Carl Cashman (sub) – for their energy, expertise and commitment throughout the year.

Planning and Housing

The LINZ Board has engaged extensively with the Labour Government's planning reforms, especially the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. I've argued for stronger powers to tackle land banking, to ensure the democratic legitimacy of planning authorities is maintained, to create a new use class for second/holiday homes, and greater emphasis on delivering social housing. Roger raised the severe shortage of planning officers, while Paula suggested using space above shops for new homes.

On housing, we supported reviewing the LGA's position on Right to Buy and pushed for giving councils the ability to suspend the scheme locally. The Board agreed to return to this discussion in a future meeting. I also continue to campaign for diversification in housebuilding and more tools to help councils meet local need.

Climate Change and Net Zero

In November, we supported establishing a new statutory duty for councils on climate change – with the critical caveat that it must be properly funded. A cross-party task and finish group was set up to explore this further, with Roger now serving on that group.

We've continued to push for progress despite Government disengagement on issues like nutrient neutrality, grid capacity and environmental standards. I'm proud Liberal Democrats continue to keep these topics on the agenda and bring in learning from Lib Dem-run councils.

Transport

At our January meeting, we were invited to feed into the Department for Transport's new Integrated Transport Strategy. I questioned the government's long-term commitment to the financial sustainability of Transport for London and emphasised the need to ensure regional fairness across the strategy. Paula Slade pressed for a more balanced approach beyond London, and we highlighted how sustainable transport infrastructure can unlock housing and economic growth.

We also contributed to LGA work on the Spending Review, underlining how investment in public transport and joined-up planning is essential for long-term national prosperity.

Devolution and local government empowerment

I challenged the Government's piecemeal and inconsistent approach to English devolution. Local areas must have a say in how they're governed – something Liberal Democrats have long stood for. We argued for more clarity on governance models, future elections, and support for councils facing the loss of experienced members due to restructuring.

Town Centres and Development

I've continued to advocate for better planning tools to support town centre regeneration. The LGA has highlighted concerns about the High Street (Designation and Review) Bill, and I've spoken about the importance of brownfield development and protecting councils' rights to influence their local environment.

What I've done

- Met with councillors and Lib Dem Groups nationwide to share LINZ Board priorities.
- Chaired all councillor briefing on highway maintenance.
- Attended a ministerial round table on strategic planning.
- Attended the LGA Conference, Parliamentary Reception and Member Peer Conference.
- Spoke at Spring and Autumn Federal Conference, Kickstart and the Next Generation Programme to promote the Board's work.
- Worked closely with Lib Dem colleagues to sign off letters and responses to Government.
- Supported Paula's work on flood resilience and Roger's work on climate duties.
- Regular engagement with other Board leads to build cross-cutting policy ideas.

Reflections

The Board continues to work well collaboratively and we are proud to bring ideas from Lib Dem councils into national discussion. However, there is room for improvement in how opportunities are shared across the Board. I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about the great work Lib Dem Councils and councillors are making in areas relevant to the board.

Happy to answer any questions or discuss further.

victor.chamberlain@southwark.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Improvement and Innovation Board

Councillor Tim Pickstone



Hopefully you will be aware of the services provided by the LGA for its member authorities. This 'sector led improvement work' is funded by a separate grant from DLUHC, a grant which has been renewed for 2025/26.

The services include experienced staff to guide and advise local authorities (Regional Lead Peers), National Peers appointed through the political groups and the Peer Challenge, helping councils identify issues and improve ourselves.

It also includes training for elected members and officers, and programmes that you will be very familiar with such as the Next Generation, the Leadership Programme and the LGA's own data platform LG Inform.

In 2024/25 at least some form of LGA support helped 100 per cent of member authorities.

LGA Role in Improvement Work

Much of the last year has been dominated by the change of Government, and how this might, and has, changed how the Government works with the local government sector around assurance. You will be aware that OFLOG, set up by the previous Conservative government, has been abolished. This has removed a significant amount of potential duplication and competition for the LGA's work, but the budget previously allocated to OFLOG hasn't followed. Discussions about how the Government and the LGA work together to improve local government are ongoing.

The LGA has been successful in getting significant additional money for specific projects such as:

- Support for councils with the CQC inspection regime around social care
- To support councils who are looking at building council housing.
- Support the Government's devolution programme, in particular supporting new mayoral combined authorities
- Support for digital transformation work.

Peers and Peer Reviews

The Board has continued to work with the Political Group Offices to review the work of elected members who have been appointed as 'peers' to undertake not only the above Peer Challenges, but also other Peer work commissioned by councils or the LGA.

It was great to see so many Liberal Democrat member peers at the Member Peer Conference in Manchester earlier this year. The event is being repeated this November in Leamington Spa.

Government Improvement and Assurance Framework

The Board has been involved in the development of the above, and following consultation this has been published to bring together guidance and best practice on ways that local councils find assurance (audit, Standards Committees, Statutory Officers).

Local Government Recruitment Programme

The Board has been reviewing The Local Government Graduate Programme – 'Impact', aimed at recruiting and developing future leaders for local councils. This program places graduates in councils across the UK for two-year fixed-term contracts, providing diverse experiences through various placements, and the pilot programme, which was conducted in the North East, received recognition with a national award.

Innovation Zone

Finally, just to highlight the Innovation Zone, again taking place at this year's LGA Conference. This is short presentations on some of the great innovations taking place in local government including a number of Liberal Democrat run and led councils.

Thank you

My thanks to my fellow Liberal Democrat Board members: Councillor Mike Every and Mayor Peter Taylor, to our substitute member Councillor Paul Crossley and our Liberal Democrat National Peer Councillor Alan Connett.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require further information:

tim.pickstone@cumberland.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Economy and Resources Board

Councillor Keith House



The Economy and Resources Board leads for the LGA on a range of financial issues for local government: pay, terms and conditions, workforce, welfare reform, economic policy and elections.

The Lib Dem team last year expanded to three members, and I am very grateful for the experience and insightful commentary from Lucy Nethsingha and Michael Headley.

Much of the Resources Board's work has been business as usual: handling pay negotiations through National Employers, lobbying government on fair funding, and understanding the mess that is the broken audit system. Some issues have changed with the new government since last summer, some have not.

Labour arrived with a blizzard of activity and consultations. Many of these have been technical and, although time consuming, are not the stuff of Lib Dem campaigning.

One area of progress has been audit. The system is now so broken it will take years to recover, with increased cost and many hundreds of disclaimed audits. The responsibility for this sits squarely with the last government, due to the increasing complexity of audits following private sector failures. We all need to understand the new language of backstops and delays, before simplification finally allows a catch up. This will cost more, and take years to achieve, with the prospect of appointments being made by a government agency through the new Local Audit Office rather than by local government.

There has been no movement on fair funding or change to business rates. This has been pushed into the territory of the Spending Review due later this summer. There is no evidence of the end to austerity, and no sign that local government reorganisation will deliver genuine financial viability without either new funding, removed responsibility or a big increase in Council Tax.

Pay has been a major challenge over the last year, and is again this year. Increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) continue to put pressure on lower pay points and put pressure upwards on pay bands. Last year's pay offer to the unions was only accepted in the autumn. This year, an increase slightly above the government's public sector guideline, at 3.2 per cent, has been offered by National Employers. Reaction from unions has not been positive, so we should not expect an early settlement. A rescaling of pay bands is needed to cope with the NMW: this is a major piece of work that needs to sit alongside the two or three-year local government finance settlement expected for 2026 and beyond.

Over the coming year we can expect to see further pressure on benefits and broader welfare. Securing a united view across the LGA will be increasingly hard to achieve with the wider politics. We will promote a renewed discussion on election systems given the fragmentation we are seeing that means First Past the Post can deliver winners on less than 20 per cent of the vote. That is not "fair votes".

Finally, to record my thanks to our team at the LGA in Smith Square, who have given us fulsome support on the Board in a year of increasing complexity not least with the change in government.

keith.house@eastleigh.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Councillor Heather Kidd



The Board has covered a wide range of issues this year with several new areas coming to the Board. Several areas overlap with other Boards and joint work is important.

The main areas covered this year include:

Cohesion and Counter Extremism

Councils and councillors are able to respond to extremist activity to mitigate the impact extremists have on community cohesion: Delivered a programme of support to councils on tackling extremism through the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism, including: 1) A series of roundtables and webinars for practitioners to share emerging challenges and facilitate support. 2) Case studies, guidance and maintaining practitioner KHub sites on tackling extremism and hate crime to capture good practice. 3) Facilitating academic support to councils on tackling extremism. 4) Four one-day Leadership Essentials on cohesion for members, leading to an online network for members on cohesion/counter extremism. Review of the SIGCE and its work with us on this area.

Modern Slavery

Ensuring councils are better able to tackle modern slavery and have the tools they need: 1) Working with the Home Office and others for a new modern slavery bill, to clarify in domestic law the entitlements of victims (which largely comes from international agreements); and an updated Government modern slavery strategy setting out the Government's multifaceted approach to tackling the issue. 2) Support our members through structures such as our Modern Slavery Network, especially on the area of local partnerships.

Violent Crime

Government wants to halve serious violent crime, tackle retail crime, have a plan to get knives off our streets and halve knife crime in a decade. The Board has been involved in discussions about tackling retail crime and what is practical for reducing knife crime – including reducing supply and demand for knives.

Reoffending

Government is committed to build 20,000 prison places and are setting out the Victims, Courts and Public Protection Bill. The government wishes to move to a more non-custodial justice system for less serious offences. Picking up the Gauke Review recently published.

Early Prisoner Release

Councils are properly prepared for and able to manage any impacts from the prisoner release scheme over September and October: Engagement with the Ministry of Justice's SDS 40 prisoner release scheme to ensure councils are fully informed about the details of the planning process and able to prepare appropriately.

Responding to the COVID and Grenfell Inquiries

Councils have robust emergency planning processes in place, procedures in place, councillors and council officers need to understand their roles in civil emergencies, and councils are able to promote resilience in their communities. The Board have: 1) Lobbied government to shape their response to the recommendations in the COVID Inquiry Module One and the Grenfell Inquiry final report on strengthening emergency planning and resilience activity at a national and local level. 2) Supported members and officers to strengthen council activity on resilience, including approaches to societal resilience.

Other areas of work have included:

- Supporting councils' in delivering high quality bereavement related services and registrars' functions. Completed a response to the Law Commission on regulation of the funeral industry.
- Hold the annual LGA Licensing Conference and run Licensing Leadership Essentials courses.
- Licensing of driverless vehicles.
- Work on knife crime.
- Mobile phone theft with the Home Office.
- Community Safety Partnerships and Police and Crime Commissioner relationships.

It has been a full year and I thank the group and the Board officers for their support this year. The Board has also succeeded in reaching national press several times. I have enjoyed my role as Chair.

heather.kidd@shropshire.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Fire Service Management Committee and Fire Commission

Councillor Carolyn Lambert



It has been another challenging year for the Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful as always to colleagues (both elected members and officers at the LGA) who have supported me inside and outside of meetings of the Fire Commission and Fire Services Management Committee.

The annual conference organised by the LGA is always productive, educational and inspiring and this year in Newcastle lived up to expectations. The new Fire Minister, Alex Norris MP, attended in person and we hope this will ensure that the Fire and Rescue Service has a strong national voice at government level.

Another important innovation was the discussion panel chaired by Sarah Ward, Deputy Head of Workforce at the LGA who was joined by Steve Wright, the newly elected General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union and Cllr Nick Chard who, until his recent retirement as a councillor, chaired the Employers side of the National Joint Council for wage negotiations in the service.

Their lively and far-ranging discussion provided an important insight into the work of the NJC. Another presentation that captured the implications of emerging national policy was that by Jo Cole, the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime in York and North Yorkshire. Her frank and informative account of her first few months in the role provided invaluable context for what is the biggest shakeup for a generation in the structure and delivery of local government.

Devolution has been on the agenda for both the Fire Commission and the Fire Service Management Committee. It will be important to link the work the LGA is doing on this with the approach taken by the National Fire

Chief's Council. It is critical that the Fire and Rescue Service has a strong, independent voice in any devolution arrangements and that governance arrangements are both appropriate to the service and accountable. As a councillor for East Sussex, one of the 'Devo six' local authorities who are putting themselves forward to become a Mayoral Strategic Authority, this will be an important test as the new authority takes shape.

On call remains a challenge nationally for the service in terms of recruitment and retention and I am working actively with the National Fire Chief's Council to ensure that our joint approach is targeted and effective, both in terms of policy and operational delivery.

The reform agenda, including work on culture, and finance continue to present challenges. The recently convened Ministerial Advisory Group is a helpful forum to highlight strategic national issues and to raise the profile of the Fire and Rescue Service as an important and independent emergency service at top government level. The service nationally remains committed to continuous improvement, but it is important that recognition is given to the level of resource required to deliver reform. Whilst His Majesty's Inspectorate provides a helpful method of measuring success or of identifying where improvement is required, members are continuing to challenge and scrutinise the approach of the Inspectorate where this is appropriate.

cllr.carolyn.lambert@eastsussex.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

City Regions Board

Councillor Gareth Roberts



SO LONG, AND THANKS FOR ALL THE POLICY PAPERS

Now is the time to say goodbye. Now is the time to yield a sigh. Now is the time to wend away, until we meet again, some sunny day.

It is, indeed, the time to say Goodbye, as it is with the heaviest of hearts that I regret to inform you all that my term of office on the City Regions board is coming to an end. In my time, I've served under four different chairs; Richard Lees, who chaired very much in the style of an ITV 70's game show host, Marvin Rees, Satvir Kaur and latterly Liam Robinson and as given that he might read this and I don't want an awkward exchange on his home turf, let me just say he's an EXCELLENT chair. As I was beginning to feel like Elaine Stitch, "I've seen them all, and my dear, I'm still here". Except, soon I won't be.

And as is so often the case, I'm leaving just as the party is getting started. Now, don't get me wrong, the City Regions board does excellent work, such as co-ordinating around work such as skills and growth, and trying to make sense of some of various governments more bonkers initiatives, but the board has come into its own since July 2024 as the vital work of devolution has been thrust to the fore.

It's fair to say that sometimes there's a bit of tension as to where pieces of work sit most comfortably. Nobody says it out loud, of course, as they have more taste, but sometimes there's a distinct feeling that something really should be being looked at by People and Places, or perhaps by core cities. But Devolution has City Regions written all over it and I shall be sorry to miss the conversations that take place as we take Angela Rayner's hand and take a collective leap into the unknown.

So, it is with a degree of sadness that I take my leave, and I hope these updates have been of some use, or at least some small diversion, over the years. But I hope that this won't be the last that's seen of me. I may be taking a term or two off to recharge the batteries, but in the words of Arnold Schwarzenegger, "I'll be back."

cllr.groberts@richmond.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

People and Places Board

Councillor Caroline Leaver



The People and Places Board seeks to develop greater clarity on the role of nonmetropolitan authorities in enabling economic growth for the long-term benefit of residents, and on how transformation in public services can enable that. The Lib Dem team has been championing rurality and the particular challenges facing rural councils and smaller towns, despite the clear push by Labour members against this. Consequently, the language of the Board now includes “rural” and commissioned studies now include activity in more sparsely populated areas.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

A lot of time and energy has gone into this item in the last year, with the Lib Dems leading the way on highlighting how one size should not fit all, and that rural LGR may well not fit well into the largely urban model set out by government. Clarity has been sought from government on what powers will be devolved to strategic authorities and what powers will move up from councils. The role of town and parish councils has been highlighted by Lib Dems, and in particular the range for city wide councils to the smallest of parishes in more rural areas.

Concerns remain about the impact on local service delivery of the move to unitary councils of between 300-500k population, and the practicalities and governance of strategic authorities. Lib Dems have been joined by other parties highlighting financial implications of working up new models and have promoted the view that new unitary councils need to be financially sustainable.

Many practical concerns remain, not least of which is how place shaping and the Planning system will work, how different Local Plans and levels of five-year housing supply will work in practice across larger unitary councils. The national party has not been hugely helpful in the debate on devolution and LGR, lacking a clear and consistent message.

In addition, the Lib Dem team has pushed the importance of the voice of Leaders and Councillors at district level on Strategic Authorities, reflecting governance and scrutiny arrangements, including political balance and a robust democratic model.

Local Growth

In response to consultation by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government into ceasing funding for some LEP functions the LGA and Board have been clear that local government should not be expected to deliver functions without funding. Lib Dems have been a strong voice on the Board which has emphasised the importance of local government in delivering the inclusive growth and prosperity sought by the proposed UK Industrial Strategy.

Employment and Skills

Lib Dems on the Board have been tenacious in calling inclusion of Green Jobs in skills development. Government has now announced £1million each for four pilot councils to develop green jobs to support clean energy infrastructure (Aberdeen, Cheshire, Lincolnshire and Pembrokeshire).

The Board commissioned “The Evolving role of local government in employment, skills and growth” gathering intelligence on how LEP functions are being integrated into local government, including challenges and examples of best practice. This included rural areas as well as larger market towns.

The LGA successfully lobbied government to secure a £900million fund to support an transitional year of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, preventing a funding cliff edge for essential skills and business support provision. This followed at session between MHCLG officials and lead UKSPF officers in 70 district and unitary councils to discuss the issues of the transitional year.

The role of housing regeneration in high street revitalisation

We have for a long while known that we need to increase the permanent residential base within our town centres as a way of increasing prolonged trade, introducing a more family-focused evening economy, increasing a feeling of safety with natural surveillance and improving the building stock appearance through maintenance and upkeep by tenants. Issues that often hold back town centre revitalisation include absent landlords, flood risk, listed buildings/conservation areas that prevents large-scale modernisation, often buildings only have one entrance and exit and therefore can't easily be converted on the top floor for housing. Whilst some planning reform may help a little, the biggest barriers are the flood risk and the absent landlords (often pension pots or investment portfolios outside of the area). Lib Dems on the Board have highlighted that councils would need enhanced intervention powers to work with absent landlords, capital funding pots and engagement with Environment Agency to look at their flood defence programmes and priorities.

Public Service Reform

The People and Place Board, together with the City Regions Board, commissioned workshops to identify views on the future of a place-based approach to public services in the current economic, fiscal and political climate, and to make recommendations regarding potential changes in legislation, departmental procedure and local delivery systems.

Rural Deprivation

Government has moved Rural Services Delivery Grant funds from compensating some councils for the additional costs of service delivery in very rural areas towards tackling deprivation. The Lib Dem team has called for recognition of the impact on life chances of rural deprivation in these calculations and has called for health inequality and socioeconomic disadvantage to be considered at the lowest level possible.

caroline.ndlibdems@gmail.com

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Liberal Democrat retained peers

Councillor Alan Connett



LGA Review of the Standards Process

Councillors facing a council's Standards complaint need a sturdy constitution. It's often not a fair process and although, currently, the sanctions are limited, the strain on a councillor can take a heavy toll.

There are councillors who feel stranded in a process that appears to have no end. The process is not one of equal arms.

The team of retained Member Peers, Cllr Alan Connett, Cllr Howard Sykes and Cllr Sarah Butikofer worked together to prepare the response submitted by the Group to the Government's consultation on the review of local Government standards. Alan was also part of the LGA working group which helped prepare the LGA's corporate submission.

The retained Member Peers can sometimes assist with a level of general support to colleagues who find themselves facing a Standards complaint.

Post election 'change of control'

Support for Liberal Democrat council groups

Working together with colleagues at ALDC and in the Party's campaigns team, we again prepared well in advance for the May elections in both 2024 and this year. We assign 'buddies' to link with our council and group leaders, so they have a central point of contact leading up to the elections and in the important days afterwards.

The three retained Member Peers provide a wide range of support for our council groups and leaders across the country and ensure the hugely supportive LGA 'change of control' package of support to councillors finding themselves running councils, is in place very quickly.

We are grateful each year to the willing volunteers who are 'election buddies'. Our thanks to councillors Joe Harris, Bridget Smith, Bill Revans, Paula Widdowson, Liz Green, Gerald Vernon Jackson, Richard Kemp, Sarah

Butikofer, Howard Sykes, Ryan Priest, Wendy Fredericks, and colleagues in the LGA Liberal Democrats Group Office, Terry Stacy, Rob Banks and Colin Ross.

Supporting Liberal Democrats in local government

The team of retained Member Peers also support our council groups with facilitated 'away-days', training and development opportunities, Peer Mentoring, support for service specific issues.

Peer assignments and mentoring

We welcome applications to become a Member Peer and especially from women, young councillors, and councillors with good experience in planning, adult and children's services, finance, housing and social media.

Email colin.ross@local.gov.uk for an application form. Do it NOW.

Help and support throughout the year

The retained Member Peers help and support Liberal Democrat Groups on local authorities in LGA membership. Our support includes, facilitated events for Groups, future-planning for the council, putting that planning into reality, group issues, general advice and arranging mentoring.

Contact points

Cllr Alan Connett

E: alan.connett@btinternet.com

T: 07843 013705

Cllr Howard Sykes

E: howard.sykes@oldham.gov.uk

T: 07867 507653

Cllr Sarah Butikofer

E: sarah.butikofer@btinternet.com

T: 07968 897235

Thank you

My thanks to Lisa Smart and Ryan Priest for all their support over the past years. Lisa stepped down as a Regional Lead Peer following her election as MP, and Ryan moved from the LGA Group office and was succeeded by Colin Ross. My continuing thanks to Sarah and Howard, the Group Office (Terry, Rob and Colin), all our Member Peers and ALDC for the help and support throughout the year. Also, to the LGA Principal Advisors and the Improvement Team for their ongoing support.

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and International Councillor Flo Clucas



I am currently occupying two roles for the LGA on the European scene.

In the CEMR I am Finance Spokesperson and in that body, Chair of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality.

I have also recently attended the UK CoR Contact Group meeting in Brussels. This was a very interesting meeting that looked at how we can work together and at a range of topics that would be at the core of work to be done.

We were greeted so warmly at the meeting, that it was like going home! We are back, wanted and needed as part of the wider European family. Our discussion in the meeting was in relation to the following, on which I was able to intervene:

- following the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement
- the CoR UK Contact Group will meet twice yearly. Meeting will debate as follows
- raising awareness of local and regional concerns
- supporting cross-border and territorial cooperation
- exploring EU-UK cooperation in relevant international fora
- debating cooperation on key topics.

I have attended, and spoken, on Violence Against Women at the Congress of Europe, which took place in Strasburg, as well as an event held by the CEMR in Brussels.

At each of the meetings, I was able to speak about work done by the LGA to support councillors by providing training, access to advice and assistance, which my own council, Cheltenham has used for elected members.

I attended the event in Brussels at which I spoke and again was able to cite LGA assistance. In addition, as the DG of the European Commission Just Department (Legal Department) was present, I asked for work to be done to protect our young people from harmful social media and to look at financial support for female politicians – as we have in the party – and female entrepreneurs.

flo.clucas@btinternet.com

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

District Councils Network

Councillor Bridget Smith



The main focus for the District Councils Network (DCN) over recent months has obviously been Devolution and LGR. We have run a number of well received and well attended webinars as well as circulating regular updates on what has been a fast moving and frequently changing picture.

This work will continue as we move into discussion about the future of DCN and its potential to be the representative membership body for the new and existing unitaries. The current situation is that a number of existing unitaries already choose to be members of both DCN and CCN reflecting that they have responsibilities for all areas covered by the two tier system. It therefore feels to be a natural progression for the DCN to rebrand and re-focus itself to fulfil that role for future unitary councils.

We will be consulting with the membership to assess if they agree with this view and what the offer should be to meet the new needs of unitary councils and councillors. The difficulty will be to differentiate the DCN offer from the LGA's. I believe that there will always be a necessary role for a specialist body that can pick up on the details and sector/area specific issues that the LGA may well not have the capacity to do. I sense that the LGA will have far closer links with Government than in the past and this creates a need for a body more closely aligned with its membership.

Much work is going on across the LGA, including through its Devolution T and F group on Devolution and this will hopefully feed into various government departments as we move to the first reading of the bill before summer recess.

Current concerns include the lack of clarity about the future of Police and Crime Commissioners and the timing and co-terminosity of the new massive Integrated Care Boards.

cllr.bridgetsmith@scambsgov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

County Councils Network

Councillor Lucy Nethsingha



The recent set of elections have been a major shock for County Councils Network (CCN), as Reform are now the second largest party in the organisation. The proportionality with the new Reform Councillors will be as follows:

The new CCN political balance, as of 8 May, is now as follows:

CCN Political balance	
Conservative	32.5%
Reform UK	26.0%
Liberal Democrat	21.4%
Independents/Other	8.1%
Labour	7.2%
Green	4.8%
Total	100.0%

In line with the Local Government Association and CCN constitutions, as the party with the largest relative majority, the Conservative group will retain the CCN Chair position.

The position in the LGA and CCN constitutions on Chair positions going automatically to the largest party is something I would suggest we need to review urgently. As we are increasingly seeing a five or six party system within local government, the largest party could have a relatively small number of the votes in an organisation, and for them to take the Chair of that organisation without any need for cross party working seems unhelpful.

The situation at CCN is fairly urgent, as it may be the case that Reform become the largest party relatively soon (depending on where elections take place next year). However the same issues are also likely to apply across the whole of the LGA.

The other big concern at CCN is the comprehensive spending review, and the fair funding review. The fair funding review is likely to lead to a moving of government support away from London, and rural areas, towards the urban metropolitan councils in the north. With many upper tier rural authorities already facing dire budget situations reducing our funding even further is going to cause huge problems. In addition there are the questions of the statutory over-ride for SEND deficits, and the ever increasing costs in both SEND and social care.

The good news is that there are far more Lib Dem Leaders of CCN councils post election, the less good news is that these problems are very much now on the plate of the new Lib Dem led councils!

lucynethsingha@icloud.com

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Federal Party Coordinator

Councillor Chris White



ALDC and the LGA Group have continued to work closely together. Key to this have been meetings of all Liberal Democrat councillors who sit on the various Federal Committees.

Much of my work has been at the Federal Board level. Most recently:

Membership

A number of us feel that the offer to members (for instance regular mailings) is weak compared with ALDC and outside organisations.

Relations between ALDC and the Federal Campaigns Department need still to be resolved, especially in relation to training.

We need to be better at winning 'big elections' (Mayoral and PCC), which will become more common with local government reorganisation.

Future priorities need to include:

- protecting incumbent MPs
- improving diversity
- plans for Labour-facing areas (and probably now Reform facing areas)
- tackling the Green Party
- tackling electoral 'black holes'.

Spring Conference received a proposal to amend the constitution to remove the voting rights of many who sit on Federal Board (including the chairs of most committees) and replace with increased numbers of those elected by members.

While for a moment this may have looked attractive:

- downgrading other Federal committees risks going back to the days when the committees didn't really talk to each other, which resulted in some spectacular shambles
- those elected by members do not have a means of being held accountable by those members, unlike committee chairs and others like the Principal Councillor representative (Bluntly, it can often be an artwork competition)
- the local government voice would be reduced compared with those claiming direct mandates from the membership
- not to have the chair of the Campaigns Committee as a full member of the governing board suggests that campaigning is not taken as seriously as it should be by the Party
- the proposal did not contain any reference to a particular problem or problems that this amendment is attempting to remedy, which is especially odd given that the Federal Board in its current form has presided over the most successful period of campaigning ever.

The proposal did not receive support but I suspect it will return in another form.

The Federal Board actually works pretty well in its current form.

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Local Partnerships

Councillor Howard Sykes MBE



Owned by the Public Sector for the public sector, Local Partnerships is an in-house public sector delivery partner jointly owned by the Local

Government Association, HM Treasury, and the Welsh Government.

It was established to support public sector organizations in delivering projects and managing change, especially in the face of increasing service demands and tightening budgets.

The organisation provides expert advice, practical resources, and hands-on support across areas such as infrastructure, climate action, housing, procurement, and digital transformation. Its mission is to help public services thrive by acting as a bridge between local and central government.

Local Partnerships closed the financial year 24-25 on £12.6m, its best ever revenue year and up £1.4m, (13 per cent) year on year. It also delivered a surplus in line with annual board requirements.

Notable success stories over the past 12 months include:

- **Award-winning EV Procurement:** Local Partnerships, in collaboration with the Welsh Government, won the Best Procurement Delivery Award at the 2024 GO Awards. This was for their innovative electric vehicle (EV) procurement initiative, which streamlined access to EVs for public sector bodies
- **Programme Management Office (PMO) Toolkit:** They developed and rolled out a comprehensive PMO toolkit to help local authorities improve project management capacity and capability. This toolkit has been adopted by several councils to enhance governance and delivery of complex projects
- **Transformation Support:** Local Partnerships continued to support councils across England and Wales with transformation programmes, helping them redesign services to be more efficient, sustainable, and citizen-focused

Local Partnerships has directly supported six Liberal Democrat controlled councils on the projects below, as well as multiple balanced councils. This is in addition to centrally funded programmes which support multiple councils including the Waste Disposal Infrastructure Programme (WIDP), funded by DEFRA and the Contract Management Pioneer Programme (CMPP) funded by CCS.

OxCC Green Finance Options	Oxfordshire County Council
Cambridgeshire CC Adaptation	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambridgeshire County Council PANZ project support	Cambridgeshire County Council
West Kent Working	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cotswold Insourcing Support	Cotswold District Council
Dorset OFC Phase 2 FY25	Dorset Council
Commercialising Connected and Automated Mobility: Deployment (Cambridge Connector)	Cambridgeshire County Council
Watford Current Shared Services Costs	Watford Borough Council
Didcot HIF Health Check 2024	Oxfordshire County Council
BATc appraisal of future options	Cambridgeshire County Council

For the current financial year, Local Partnerships will focus on securing more long-term nationally funded mandates from national government with a particular focus on supporting LGR and devolution work streams.

It will also continue to develop its core offer around its three core business units: Climate, Commercial and Place in line with national missions supporting local delivery, alongside providing assurance and data analytics capacity and capability services.

For further detail on what Local Partnerships does and how they can help your council, please visit our web site: localpartnerships.gov.uk

Local Partnerships maintains an active presence at the LGA conference so do pop by their stand to find out more!

Also feel free to contact me: howard.sykes@oldham.gov.uk

LEAD MEMBER REPORT

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

Councillor Paul Smith



I was appointed to the Committee in September 2024, replacing Cllr Howard Sykes, a challenge in itself given his experience in this area. Since then it has met twice. The next meeting was scheduled for 2 June 25. All meetings have been held via Teams and attendance has been good everyone has achieved 100 per cent despite occasion problems with connections. The committee is apart from me this Rob Alden (Chair and Con) is from Birmingham City Council, Vince Maple is from Medway(Lab) and Cllr Anne Dale is from Northumberland County Council (Indy).

Some of the issues covered during the year include:

- Review of updated Terms of Reference.
- Audit and Risk Committee work programme.
- Internal Audit Programme.
- Finance report, including half-year results and latest forecast.
- Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption update.
- Performance report 23/24: quarterly monitoring: July-Sept.
- Members complaints on which there have been one since I joined!
- Summary of ARAC findings to be reported to LGA Board.

Financial pressures on the LGA have become more acute with Government funding looking to be frozen and the LGA not even getting the limited "compensation" for the rise in NI contributions that councils did. This has been fed back to the board evidence of effective action to address budget issues have been demonstrated, however further difficult decision still have to be made. Considerable progress has also been achieved on strengthening anti fraud procedures following the case highlighted in Howard's report last year.

Howard's legacy on the Committee is widely recognised and I hope to continue to build on his work in the future.

Paul.E.Smith@colchester.gov.uk

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Office

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Office

The Liberal Democrat Group office provides direct support and advice to Liberal Democrat council groups and councillors whilst also acting as the day-to-day voice of the Liberal Democrats within the LGA.

We currently have three full-time members of staff. Terry Stacy, the Head of Office, Rob Banks, Political Advisor, and Colin Ross, Political Officer. Rob and Terry both have experience as Liberal Democrat Councillors and Colin was previously Head of Office for the Liberal Democrat Mayor of Bedford Borough, Dave Hodgson.

We help the Group to achieve its political objectives within the LGA and the party, working closely with LGA officers, Liberal Democrat HQ, our parliamentarians in both the House of Commons and House of Lords and with our colleagues at the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors with whom we organise joint events as well as sessions and fringes at both spring and autumn party conferences.

In addition to supporting the LGA Liberal Democrat Group we are also the first port of call for Liberal Democrat councillors in relation to a variety of policy, governance or legal issues. We do weekly emails to all councillors on a range of issues, news from the Liberal Democrats, local government news, good practice from council groups and councillors, highlight lobbying successes and details of events for councillors and campaigners.

We also use X; follow us on @libdemlocalgov, on linkedin at LGA Liberal Democrat Group, on bluesky @libdemlocalgov.bsky.social and on Instagram at LGA LibDems.

The LGA Liberal Democrat Group Office



Terry Stacy MBE

Head of the Group Office terry.stacy@local.gov.uk

Terry is responsible for the operation of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group. He also provides specific support on housing, welfare, local government finance, Cities and Urban regeneration and fire.



Rob Banks

Political Adviser rob.banks@local.gov.uk

Rob provides support for: Local Infrastructure and Net Zero; Community Wellbeing including Adult Social Care; People and Places; and Rob supports the weekly councillor email bulletins, the regular council leader calls and helps co-ordinate the group's presence at party and LGA conferences.



Colin Ross

Political Officer colin.ross@local.gov.uk

Colin provides support for Children and Young People and supports the group's presence on social media. He co-ordinates the work for Local Government Improvement and the Liberal Democrat Group's peer support work.

Liberal Democrats increased their numbers once again on Dudley Council



Liberal Democrats are now the official opposition on Leicestershire and Durham (pictured) and Kent.





Local Government Association

18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Fax 020 7664 3030

Email info@local.gov.uk

www.local.gov.uk

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