



LGA Labour Group Briefing for Councillors 2019 Annual Conference, Brighton

LGA LABOUR GROUP – KEY MESSAGES

Labour in local government is:

- **Defending our communities:** Year on year, Labour councils shield our communities from the worst of the government austerity agenda. 31 million people across England and Wales (55% of the population) have either a Labour council or a Labour Mayor, with 120 Labour-led councils and Labour Metro Mayors in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, and North of Tyne delivering vital public services.
- **Delivering Labour values:** The Tory government have systematically stripped our communities of assets, hit the poorest in society with welfare cuts, have cut council funding by over 60p in the £1 since 2010. Despite this, Labour councils are finding radical and innovative ways to build more council housing, protect vulnerable children, provide skills and learning opportunities for young people, and to keep our streets clean, as set out in LGA Labour's '[100 More Innovations](#)' publication and [website](#). Labour councils are leading on the fight to tackle climate change – you can read more about this at the [LGA Labour Climate Emergency website](#).
- **Democratic and accountable:** Labour's 7000 councillors are the most accountable elected representatives in our party, and are fighting on the frontline of austerity every day to protect communities from the destructive policies of successive Tory governments. The legal and financial frameworks that councillors have to operate within should be recognised, and the contribution of Labour councillors should be celebrated. Their voices must be valued at every level, with higher level of representation in all formal party structures.
- **Setting out a radical manifesto for the next Labour government:** Labour councils and leaders are coming up with the radical policy solutions we need to reverse austerity and transform public services. The LGA Labour Group has led detailed policy work to feed into the next manifesto, and how councils can work in partnership with a national government led by Jeremy Corbyn to deliver for the many, not the few. You can read more about this later in this briefing.
- **Our path back to power in Westminster:** History shows that Labour's route back to Government lies through winning elections in town halls across the UK, and that victories are achieved when activists and councillors work together. Local elections must be given the highest priority, with proper resources and a real say on campaigning for councillors at a national level.

HELP STRENGTHEN THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AT CONFERENCE

MAKE A SPEECH TO CONFERENCE

It is now much easier for delegates to get called to make a speech from the floor – so it's vital that as many councillors as possible take the opportunity to share their stories of success and draw attention to the funding and policies that councils need to succeed.

There are four main themed plenary sessions, but given the breadth of policy areas covered by local government you can probably speak in any of them:

Rebuilding Public Services

Sunday 22 September, 9:45-12:35 & 14:00-17:20 - Conference Hall

New Economy

Monday 23 September, September, 09:45-12:35 – Conference Hall

New Internationalism

Monday 23 September, 14:00-16:20 – Conference Hall

Tackling The Climate Emergency

Tuesday 24 September, 9:45-12:35 & 14:00-16:45 – Conference Hall

TAKE PART IN FRINGE EVENTS AND DEBATES

There is a huge range of conference fringes related to local government – use the Conference Guide, the Conference smartphone app, or the LGA Labour conference email to look for events related to local government.

Councils are responsible for huge areas of public policy - housing, education and schools, youth services, climate change and the environment, health and social care, public health, transport, economic development, devolution, or welfare reform. Most organisations recognise that debates on these subjects are pointless unless they include a local government voice, but not all do – so if you see a panel that doesn't include a councillor try to go along and make your voice heard!

Challenge any misconceptions about the role and importance of local councils – we are the most accountable, efficient, and trusted institutions in government, and national Labour Party policy should respect our communities right to set their own local priorities. And Labour councillors are the most accountable politicians in our party – and our contribution should be valued and celebrated.

ADVICE FROM THE LGA LABOUR GROUP TEAM

The LGA Labour Group team will be available throughout Conference to assist any councillor with their speech - whether answering queries on policy, or providing examples of best practice by Labour councils. You can find us at the Councillors Lounge (ALC stand) in the Skyline room.

There is also a wealth of resource available online, including:

LGA Labour Innovations – searchable database of Labour councils innovation and best practice (<https://www.lgalabourinnovations.com>)

LGA Labour Climate Emergency – blogs, articles, and best practice examples from Labour councils tackling climate change (<https://www.lgalabourclimateemergency.com>)

Labour in local government and the next manifesto

We could be just weeks away from the election of a Labour government that is promising to be the most transformative since the Second World War. There will be an unprecedented level of expectation on his government. If Labour is to deliver, it will need to look to local government.

Ending austerity in local government

Local government has suffered the worst cuts of any part of government – councils have lost 60p out of every £1 that the last Labour Government gave to councils in 2010. Labour's manifesto must commit to truly ending austerity in local government by making an immediate emergency investment in three key crisis areas: with £2bn for **children's services**, £2bn for **adult social care**, and £510m to **prevent homelessness**.



Our broken political system enabled the Tories to make savage cuts to local public services and to asset strip local communities for over a decade without the consent of local people. Labour must ensure it can never happen again. There should be a **review of Local Government Finance**, co-produced with local government, in order to establish a fairer and more progressive system of property taxes and to establish a mechanism to ensure that revenue is appropriately redistributed according to local need.



A new partnership with local councils

Councils are responsible for the public services that matter to everyone. 44% of the commitments in the 2017 manifesto fell either directly or indirectly on English local government to deliver. But councils are not a delivery arm of national government. They are **democratic, transparent, and accountable**, and closer to their communities than any civil servant or minister in London could ever be.

The next Labour government should forge common purpose with local councils of all political colours and develop a new relationship with councils based on mutual respect and partnership. A **Local Government Commission**, made up of Councillors from every region, every authority type, and every major political party, should be given a formal role in the domestic policy-making process, to make better, more effective legislation and ensure that policies governing local services can be implemented at the frontline of delivery.

Devolve the power to tackle our biggest common challenges

Solutions to the biggest challenges of domestic policy – **building the houses we need, providing decent care for our aging population, and tackling the grave threat of climate change** – all run through local government. Councils carry out extraordinary work already in these areas but they have been held back by a lack of powers and resources. Taking decisions over how to run local services closer to where people live is key to improving them and saving money. If the next Labour government follows through with the promise to devolve powers and resources to local communities, they will be rewarded with councils delivering more quickly, with deeper impact, and in a more cost-effective way than any Whitehall initiative could ever achieve.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland already have a significant say over everything from health services to skills and transport, yet many of England's communities are still desperate for the same freedoms. A **Devolution Bill**, co-produced by local and national government, should lay the framework for a new constitutional settlement between national, regional, and local government based on mutual respect, and underpinned by a compact that respects the independence, autonomy, and equality of regional and local government and puts local people and communities at the heart of decision making.

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