

COVID-19 outbreak: reset and recovery

Councillor guidance

July 2020



Overview

At the end of March, we published councillor guidance on the COVID-19 outbreak, to support you in fulfilling your vital democratic and community role as the pandemic escalated and the country moved into an unprecedented lockdown situation. There is a huge amount of which everyone in local government can be extremely proud, when we reflect on the role councils have played in responding to COVID-19 and supporting our communities since that point. On behalf of all of us and the wider Local Government Association (LGA), thank you to each and every one of you for your efforts.

Much of our earlier guidance still stands. In the coming months, you will still be acting as community leaders, using tools such as social media, and facilitating support for residents. But three months on, it felt an appropriate point to update the guidance and consider how our role as councillors is changing as the country emerges from lockdown and the work of councils shifts from emergency response to reset and recovery,¹ albeit with some aspects of the response still ongoing.

As with our earlier guidance, the focus of this document is the specific role of councillors in councils' work leading and supporting our communities as we move through the process of ending the lockdown and look ahead to the aspirations we have for our local areas as a new form of normality is increasingly restored. COVID-19 has subverted many of the norms we expect in responding to emergencies in the UK, with a response period that already extends well beyond anything we have seen before. But in terms of the approach to recovery, it absolutely remains the case that councils will play the leading role in this work in their areas.

It has been frequently noted that we must use the opportunity created by the pandemic, however unwanted, to reopen and rebuild our communities and economies in a way that improves peoples' lives, the places they live in and society as a whole, rather than simply trying to restore what existed previously. As leaders of local places, the vital bridge between local residents and the civic institutions that serve them, councillors have a hugely important role to play in framing what this means at the local level.

We know that councillors up and down the country are already actively involved in this place shaping as well as in wider support activities. By drawing on some of these examples, and on the LGA's councillor guidance to civil emergencies², we aim to provide further inspiration about the political, civic and community leadership roles you can play as we recover from COVID-19. You can also of course continue to find case studies and good practice on the COVID-19 hub on our website.

We hope this is helpful.

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¹ We recognise that not everybody is comfortable with the term 'recovery', which in emergency management doctrine is the process that follows an emergency response. In this document, we are using the term as an umbrella phrase that incorporates alternative descriptions including restart and reset.

² <https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-civil-emergencies>

The councillor leadership role

Understanding recovery and your role

Our full councillor guidance on civil contingencies sets out the role of councillors across the full emergency management cycle of preparedness, response and recovery. Broadly, the guidance envisages a more involved role for councillors as an emergency moves into the recovery stage: while emergency responses are typically short and intensive operations led by the blue light services, councils are subsequently responsible for leading the recovery process, with democratic and community input into the question of how an area should recover absolutely vital.

As noted above, the COVID-19 pandemic has subverted many of these emergency management norms. Councils and health services have already played a leading role in the emergency response, and the prolonged length of the response and time that Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) have been stood up means that councils have established mechanisms to ensure that senior councillors can regularly input into response through their engagement with senior officers. Although response focused Strategic Coordination Groups (SCGs) will be scaled back in the coming months, response and recovery have already run in parallel for much longer than would normally be expected, and to some extent may continue to do so, not least in areas where local outbreak plans need to be activated. Local outbreak management is an area where local councillors, through Local Outbreak Control Boards – which are intended to lead communications with the public and provide oversight of the test, trace and contain system – have an important and visible role to play alongside Health Protection Boards and, if required, SCGs.

A further difference to other emergencies is that, despite every part of the country being impacted by COVID-19 over a period of several months, this response does not have the same focal point for grieving or physical rebuilding that may be expected in recovering from a flood or catastrophic incident, yet has created financial, welfare, mental health and wellbeing issues on a far wider scale.

Despite these significant differences, the fundamental principles of recovery remain the same. In line with good practice, councils and LRF partners moved quickly to begin planning recovery work at an early point in the response, with the complexities and opportunities of the recovery process in terms of social, economic, environmental and community needs and development well recognised³. And as with other recovery processes, it is undoubtedly the case that reset and recovery from COVID-19 will be a multi-faceted and long running process, with momentum required to be maintained over two phases: the immediate process of reopening and stabilisation while containing the pandemic, and a much longer term process of economic and community recovery during which the virus will hopefully be beaten.

The role of the council's political leadership

Councils' political leaders have already played a substantive role in leading their organisations during the pandemic, with many cabinets convening with senior officers on a daily basis during the height of the response. As councils and communities move into the recovery period, senior political leaders will need to maintain a visible and hands on leadership role, overseeing a range of crucial activities including:

³ The LGA's 'Rethinking local' publication sets out the opportunities if councils are given the right tools: <http://www.local.gov.uk/re-thinking-local-full-publication>

- Assuring themselves that the council, working with its partners, continues to fulfil its role and deploy resources effectively, across the full range of response and recovery activities required, while aiming to return normal service levels as soon as possible.
- Overseeing the delivery of local outbreak management and leading communities through Local Outbreak Control Board structures.
- Ensuring that the necessary steps to support recovery, including the development of a strategic approach and support for people made vulnerable by, or who are more vulnerable as a result of, COVID-19, are being undertaken.
- Ensuring that all councillors are kept fully briefed about developments and are able to contribute to shaping recovery, with effective protocols for political involvement and liaison across all tiers (parish, district/county/unitary, combined authority/Mayoral and parliamentary) in place.
- Being open, transparent and inclusive in decision making, maximising ownership of the direction of travel and using scrutiny as a tool for maximising involvement and building upon the sector's good practice at a time of crisis. Councils need to show good cross-party leadership for their areas and communities
- Enabling the engagement of communities in this process, through regular communication with local residents and the voluntary and community sector – comms.
- Putting in place appropriate scrutiny measures to ensure that a comprehensive review will enable lessons to be learnt from the response to COVID-19.
- Representing the council in key national discussions, including lobbying for resources to offset the financial impact of COVID-19 on the sector, and helping to shape the future of services such as social care.

Beyond the council's senior political leadership, all councillors have a significant role to play in shaping recovery in a way that enables local areas to build on the opportunity to strengthen community resilience and improve local places. This role incorporates a number of different activities and objectives, each of which is considered in more detail in the subsequent sections:

- shaping and agreeing recovery strategies
- leading and representing
- supporting individuals
- embedding community resilience
- supporting community cohesion
- scrutiny and lessons learnt
- strengthening the council
- maintaining wellbeing.

Shaping and agreeing recovery strategies

Given their role as local place shapers and the breadth of their service provision, councils are most likely to lead the multi-agency recovery coordination process at an LRF level, as well as in relation to their own organisations.⁴ This will include the development of a recovery strategy and supporting recovery plan and undertaking an impact assessment identifying key issues or challenges as well as opportunities within the local area. Councillors have an important influencing role to play in evolving recovery outcomes, through providing views on what the goals and objectives of the recovery strategy should be and feeding in information and intelligence from their wards.

⁴ In areas where the LRF covers multiple different council areas, there may naturally be less overlap between LRF recovery approaches and council led approaches for different parts of the LRF footprint.

Suffolk Political Reference Group

The structures developed by the Suffolk Resilience Forum to shape a county-wide approach to recovery include a Suffolk Political Reference Group, which links into the Recovery Coordination Group chaired by Suffolk County Council Chief Executive Nicola Beach.

Chaired by the leader of the county council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, the political reference group utilises the existing Suffolk public sector leaders board structure. It brings together all local authority leaders in Suffolk, health leaders, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Suffolk Police, ensuring that all parties are engaged and have an important decision-making role. It is supported by the Suffolk Chief Executives Group.

The scale of the restart, reset and recovery challenge from COVID-19 dwarfs previous recovery processes. Every single individual, family, business and community in the country has been affected by the pandemic and lockdown in particular. In just a few months it has had a hugely significant economic impact and changed the way we work and live. The pandemic has shone a light on the inequalities that exist in our society, as well as on the frailties – known only too well to councils, but increasingly now more visible to the wider population – of our systems for caring for some of our most vulnerable people. The pandemic will have exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of some groups, and made more people vulnerable for a range of different reasons; yet it has also shown the environmental benefits that might be secured through doing things differently and, for some people, the enforced change in life will have brought benefits that they want to hold on to.

Knitting together these different themes – how we live, work, care, sustain and connect in our communities – into coherent recovery strategies that focus on improving communities and peoples' lives in a way that is relevant to their areas is a key priority for councils: which are central to all of these issues. Key themes for recovery strategies will include:

- Economic and place based
 - supporting local businesses and economies to recover from the economic shock of COVID-19, and supporting local people with skills and employment
 - addressing the potential long-term implications of the pandemic on high streets etc
- Social
 - supporting people and families made vulnerable/more vulnerable by COVID-19
 - outlining plans to tackle the inequalities highlighted by the impact of the pandemic
- Community
 - maintaining new connections and neighbourhood structures to enhance community resilience
 - supporting VCS capacity adversely impacted by COVID-19
- Environmental
 - sustaining the positive environmental impacts of the lockdown as the economy begins to reopen and people transition to a new normal

- Organisational
 - restarting all services impacted by the pandemic
 - reviewing how COVID-19 changed how the council operates and what changes should be maintained, including whether services can be delivered differently
 - resetting budgets and seeking to address the financial impact the pandemic had had.

Malvern Hills District Council recovery framework

Malvern Hills District Council produced a one-sided document setting out the council's recovery framework and summarising the council's priorities in four areas: our communities and the local economy; resetting the business of the council; recovery of the organisation; councillors and democracy. The framework highlights a number of themes considered in this document, including learning lessons from the COVID-19 response, considering plans for more virtual meetings and the role of councillors in supporting communities during the recovery phase.

https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/?option=com_fileman&view=file&routed=1&name=Malvern%20Hills%20District%20Council%20Recovery%20Framework.pdf&folder=&container=fileman-files

Leading and representing

Councillors have an important role to play in leading and representing their communities and the council itself as we move through recovery. Councillors are well placed to take and share an overview of their communities and will be key to championing the recovery of their areas. This is also a time where councillors will need to lead their communities, acting as the voice of both concerns and ambitions specific to each local area. In the run up to writing this document, we have seen councillors and local leaders in places such as Bournemouth, Liverpool and Leicester, providing this very visible leadership in responding to different issues each area has experienced. Alongside this, councillors also have a leadership role to play through Local Outbreak Control Boards, which will lead communications with the public and help to lead their communities through local outbreaks of COVID-19 where they occur. The LGA is collating and sharing good practice on the test, trace and contain system, including Local Outbreak Control Boards, in a knowledge hub site which councillors can join at: <https://khub.net/group/lga-containment-covid-19/group-home>

Our earlier guidance highlighted the important community mapping role that members could play during the response, and this will continue into the recovery period. Councillors will be able to use their local knowledge to help understand and represent the needs of their local communities, highlighting their ideas and views on recovery, as well as identifying specific vulnerabilities and service needs which need attention. Community mapping and an understanding of vulnerabilities will also be important in the development – and implementation if necessary – of local outbreak management plans.

Councillors are the voice of their communities and can act as the eyes and ears for the council on the ground, providing a forum for people to discuss the new normal that is developing and any community concerns around this, then feeding back appropriately to help shape the council's approach. In other emergencies, councils have set up formal recovery or aftercare groups to help support recovery processes and contribute ideas, and councillors could consider informal structures for their areas. In engaging with residents in this way, councillors can continue to provide support and reassurance to the local community, by listening or visiting those affected and acting as a community champion and supporter.

Councillors also have an important role in representing the council in their communities, as well as vice versa. As during the response phase, councillors can continue to communicate key messages from both the council and central Government within their communities and with local media: this will be particularly important in the event of any local outbreaks.

Supporting individual residents

As community leaders, ward councillors play a crucial role in providing a link between residents and public services; members often provide a first point of contact within the council for residents, and a focal point for those seeking help, advice and support. With so many people adversely affected by COVID-19 – whether through bereavement, stress or mental health issues, or financial troubles relating to the economic impact of the lockdown – the number of residents seeking help from the council and looking to engage with their councillors has increased. Throughout the response, members have found new ways to contact residents, using telephone and video conferencing to meet virtually and discuss problems and complaints. With social distancing measures still in place, these newer methods of engaging with and supporting residents will need to be maintained in the coming months.

Rotherham Council – virtual surgeries⁵

Rotherham Council has put in place arrangements for virtual surgeries to enable residents to continue to access advice surgeries during the lockdown.

Councillor Emma Hoddinott and her two ward councillor colleagues host a ‘virtual’ surgery every Monday evening between 6.00pm and 6.30pm. They use a Zoom Pro subscription to run these sessions due to the additional functions that are included in this package. The waiting room function in particular allows the councillor to let residents wait while the councillors are already hosting a meeting with another resident.

If the resident has a computer with a webcam, they can videocall via a link on the council’s website and they can also find the link on social media. The resident can also dial in by telephone to the same system by calling the number and entering a meeting ID.

The processes were tested beforehand with the other ward councillors where they held a couple of dry runs to ensure the links, dialling options and the waiting room function worked. The councillor is the controller of the meeting and administrates the call for the half an hour slots. The councillors have reported that it was surprising how similar this was to a usual surgery.

Embedding community resilience

A positive outcome of the pandemic has been the establishment of a huge number of community support groups, the development of links between neighbours who previously did not know each other and the surge in volunteering: the significant ability of our communities to respond and support each other has been demonstrated time and time again. The challenge now is to build on this by helping to embed these structures and activities, and the spirit underpinning them, in a way that means they can be utilised in future.

The ability to encourage and manage volunteers in the community is an area in which the role of councillors has stood out. There have been many examples across the country where councillors have led groups of volunteers to support the most vulnerable or to carry out specific tasks in their communities. Councillors have a vital role in enabling volunteers and giving them the confidence to deliver support for the most vulnerable. As community leaders, councillors are in a unique position to be able to work with communities and officers in order

⁵ <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/remote-council-meetings/case-studies>

to celebrate the volunteer effort we have seen and to hold community conversations which promote the continuation of this work as we move through recovery and beyond. How this is embedded may look different in each area, but the LGA will shortly be undertaking some work looking specifically at this issue.

For parts of the voluntary and community sector which were established before the pandemic, there is a related role for councillors to play in helping councils to understand the state of the community and voluntary sector in their local community, much of which has been severely impacted by the pandemic. Working with public sector partners as well as the community and voluntary sector, councillors are in a strong position to highlight local concerns with the appropriate partners to ensure that needs are met.

Many community groups that operate at a neighbourhood level, such as area forums, will not have been able to meet physically to discuss local concerns during the pandemic, and whilst many may have embraced the use of technology to meet virtually, others may not have adapted so quickly. Councillors may want to re-engage with these forums to see what support they may need to plan for their recovery when social distancing allows so that these local level platforms can start to highlight any community needs or tensions (see below).

Supporting community cohesion

Our guidance in March noted the risk that a prolonged period of challenging circumstances – both economic and social – could undermine community cohesion and lead to an increase in tensions, particularly if the impact of the response had a disproportionate impact on specific groups or communities.

This risk remains as we begin the process of recovery. The differential health impacts of the pandemic on different groups in our society have fundamentally highlighted the pressing need to address to tackle deep seated inequalities in the UK as in other parts of the world. At the same time, the Black Lives Matter movement has been given added profile by the death in the USA of George Floyd but the recent demonstrations and associated debates about the role of historical figures and memorials in the UK have sparked counter protests and divisive debate that could translate to local community tensions.

Councillors should continue to play an active role as the eyes and ears of their communities, engaging with residents and sharing any concerns about specific local tensions. In their representative role, they can also help to support cohesion by ensuring that under-represented communities and individuals who are seldom heard are actively supported, by ensuring councils have considered appropriate routes for engagement. As community leaders, councillors know and understand their communities and are well placed to help ensure that messages around support packages reach those who might need it. Councillor involvement in meetings to understand the impact and needs of these groups, such as Community Equality Network meetings, will help not only to ensure these groups and individuals are involved in those conversations but can also advocate for those messages throughout their authority.

Equality Impact Assessments should seek the views of under-represented groups to understand what recovery looks like or is required by certain groups or individuals within the community and councillors can play a role in the development and review of these assessments to ensure local needs are considered and planned for appropriately. Local knowledge will also be essential to ensure that any communication materials are distributed in the local community where they are most likely to be seen and in the most appropriate format and languages for their communities. The LGA's Building Community Cohesion guidance provides further information on these issues.⁶

⁶ https://local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.31%20Community%20cohesion%20guidance_04.2.pdf

Scrutiny and lessons learnt

Councillors have an important role to play both in ongoing scrutiny and in supporting councils to review their responses to the pandemic in order to collect lessons learnt and identify how future emergency responses can be strengthened. Members should seek assurance that officers are undertaking debriefs and reviews at the appropriate point, and capturing, sharing and acting upon what is identified. They may also play a more direct role through formal scrutiny reviews, alongside any ongoing scrutiny meetings that have been put in place during the response.

There will be a need to consider the appropriate timing for debriefs and scrutiny reviews, balancing the need to avoid creating undue pressure when significant resources are still being devoted to aspects of the response and the development of local outbreak plans, with the need to identify and implement any changes or improvements in preparation for any further outbreaks of COVID-19.

Plymouth City Council's revised approach to scrutiny

Plymouth City Council has reshaped its normal scrutiny structures in response to COVID-19. Although the council normally operates four overview and scrutiny committees (focusing on Brexit, infrastructure and legislative change; education and children's social care; health and adult social care; performance, finance and customer focus), there was a need to consider a different approach to facilitating effective scrutiny of the response to the pandemic, as well as a need to bring the meetings online.

The council has therefore been undertaking scrutiny via a Scrutiny Management Board, comprised of the chairs from the four scrutiny committees. This has helped to ensure oversight from across all four committees in a more streamlined way that is conducive to the emergency response, as well as keeping the council's broader councillor membership involved in the work of the council at this time.

The first fully online meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board took place in early May, when the board was able to question cabinet members and senior officers on the Council's response to COVID-19 to date and its future plans. Meetings are now taking place every three weeks, with recordings of the meetings available to view online:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/#/broadcastPlaybackScreen>

Strengthening the council

Throughout the crisis, councils have gone to significant efforts to continue to lead and represent their communities by maintaining normal democratic processes in a virtual context. Councils have adapted to remote meetings and digital innovation across a range of services, and as the lockdown unwinds, councillors will have a role to play in agreeing how these changes and innovations can be embedded alongside the return of more normal structures and processes.

Virtual meetings⁷

Lichfield District Council

After testing a number of different options, Lichfield District Council decided to use Zoom US to host its online meetings. Although many members were already familiar with the software, training was provided for both councillors and to any residents joining a meeting as a speaker, which also gives the opportunity to test their connections before the committee. In addition to the ability to host meetings virtually, the council considered options for the public to be present, ultimately deciding to live-stream its meetings to its YouTube channel thereby ensuring transparency.

Ahead of the first scheduled virtual meeting, a Planning Committee meeting, the council conducted a full test meeting, including officers, using an old application. This allowed the council to refine the procedure and give all involved an opportunity to be fully familiar with the meeting functions including raised hands. Separate sessions were also held with the chairman to ensure he was happy with how the meeting would run.

The council's first online meeting saw record numbers join through either the council's own channel or through other sites; the council also received significant positive comments from other councils and the public. The council is responding to ongoing feedback to further refine the solution to be the best it can and meet the needs of officers, members and residents.

City of York Council

Public participation has always been extremely important to the City of York Council which has traditionally held drop-in sessions post incident (more usually flooding). With restrictions from COVID-19, York had to consider different opportunities for the public to directly interact with Councillors supported by subject matter experts.

In April residents were invited to watch and interact with a live #AskTheLeaders Coronavirus Q&A session on the council's Facebook page. The Leader, Deputy Leader, lead member for Climate Change and Environment along with the Head of the Paid Service, Director of Public Health and the Executive Director for Primary Care & Population Health from Vale of York clinical commissioning group all answered questions from the public. Each participant was trained to join a secure Zoom video call from their homes and communications colleagues were able to host the call, liaise with the participants and then to make their audio and video hidden to the public whilst the call was being live-streamed. The chat function of the Zoom call allowed for Facebook comments, prompts and notes to be shared throughout the call, not visible on the streamed video to Facebook.

Residents interacted with the session by either submitting questions in advance by emailing them to YourQuestions@york.gov.uk or commenting on the live video on Facebook where leaders read out questions and responded. Residents did not need a Facebook account to watch the public live video however, they did need their own account to comment on the video with their questions if they had not already submitted questions via email. Questions were answered by theme rather than individually, so that the conversations covered as many topics as possible.

With a city-wide population of around 200,000 and a Facebook following of 11,000 the Live Q&A reached over 11,600 people and received engagement from over 1,000. Live viewing peaked at around 120 with 100 live comments received. Since then, there have been over 5,000 views across Facebook and YouTube of the Coronavirus Q&A.

⁷ <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/remote-council-meetings/case-studies>

Maintaining wellbeing

Our March 2020 guidance document correctly predicted that ‘the coming months will make huge demands of all of us connected with councils, as well as a great many other people in our communities.’ While many of the most immediate and challenging pressures of response – establishing systems for supporting vulnerable people, PPE distribution, the spread of the pandemic in care homes – have reduced, it remains the case that there are still huge demands on councils to continue to deliver aspects of the response while supporting stabilisation and recovery: specific challenges include the development and implementation of plans and structures for managing local outbreaks, increases in resident vulnerability and rising councillor caseloads as the impact of the outbreak hits households. It also remains the case that many staff and councillors, in common with local residents, continue to juggle the demands of supporting family members alongside their council roles, or may have been impacted by the pandemic in terms of their own health or by bereavement.

For both officers and councillors, there is therefore a continuing need to take the time to balance the intensive work of serving our communities with individual health and wellbeing and avoid the risk of burnout after a prolonged period of stressful, high intensity work. Councillors should be mindful of this in relation to both officer and councillor colleagues and should continue to provide support and encouragement to teams involved in COVID-19 work. A series of wellbeing resources are listed at the end of this document.

Further information

Councillor guidance on COVID-19 resilience issues

LGA councillor guide – COVID-19 outbreak (March 2020)
<https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-outbreak-councillor-guidance>

Emergency response structures during COVID-19 (May 2020)
https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LRF_COVID-19_guide_14_May%20%281%29.pdf

LGA political leadership webinars, COVID-19 (May 2020)
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-covid-19-support-offer/covid-19-political-leadership-webinars-councillors>

COVID-19 leadership workbook for cabinet members
<https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-leadership-workbook-cabinet-members>

Councillor guidance on general resilience issues

LGA councillor guide to civil emergencies (November 2018)
<https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-civil-emergencies>

London Councils civil resilience handbook for councillors in London local authorities (May 2019)
<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/members-area/civil-resilience-handbook-london-councillors>

LGA/Solace Life Cycle of an Emergency document (November 2018)
https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.27%20Lifecycle%20of%20an%20emergency_02_1.pdf

COVID-19 guidance

Government guidance on COVID-19
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS guidance on COVID-19
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

LGA COVID-19 resource hub and good practice
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils>
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-good-council-practice>

Organisational and community wellbeing resources

Councillor workbook on mentally healthy communities
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Councillor%27s%20workbook%20on%20mentally%20healthier%20places.pdf>

LGA workforce wellbeing resources
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-support-your-role/covid-19-workforce>

Mind guidance on COVID-19

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

COVID-19 leadership workbook for Cabinet members (wellbeing section, page 34)

<https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-leadership-workbook-cabinet-members>

Community engagement

LGA New Conversations resource

<https://www.local.gov.uk/new-conversations-20-lga-guide-engagement>

LGA political group offices

<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-conservatives>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-labour>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-lib-dem-group>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent>