

CSN POLICY BRIEFING

LGiU CSN weekly policy summary – 25 October

This new CSN edition of the Weekly Policy Summary is for CSN subscribers only, and so doesn't include links to LGiU briefings which are not covered by the CSN subscription.

Nominations are open for the C'Ilr Awards! Councillors play a significant role in their communities, and the Annual C'Ilr Achievement Awards aim to recognise and reward those councillors who go over and above what is expected of them. If you know a councillor who deserves recognition, nominate them! <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/cllrawards/>.

LGiU is turning thirty this year, and we're having an online exhibition of thirty photographs of local government to celebrate. If you have a striking image that captures the essence of local government - past, present or future - please email in the highest resolution possible to janet.sillett@lgiu.org.uk.

LGiU podcasts are now available for free, at any time, via our very own iTunes channel! Just search for "LGiU" in the iTunes store to listen. Alternatively, they can be accessed via our website [here](#).

Lord Heseltine has dismissed claims that "failing" towns and cities should be abandoned by the government, the [BBC](#) reported this week. The former deputy Prime Minister was responding to an article in the [Economist](#), which suggested that Government efforts to save "decaying" industrial towns are "misguided" and that they should focus on helping the inhabitants.

In the news

[Council leaders could face PAC scrutiny \(£\)](#)

This week the *Times* [reported](#) (£) that council leaders could be called before Parliament's Public Accounts Committee. Margaret Hodge, the committee's chairwoman, has announced a "deep dive" investigation into town hall finances.

[Free school regulations reduced](#)

The Guardian [reports](#) that education ministers approved reductions in government regulations on proposals for new free schools earlier this year. A Department for Education document shows that Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP, the Secretary of State for Education, and Rt. Hon. David Laws MP, the Minister of State for Schools, have signed off on the policy proposals.

The BBC also [reports](#) that the same document shows the government is moving to scale back central controls over new headteacher appointments on free schools.

In 2012 LGiU published a report looking at issues of oversight and accountability surrounding academies and free schools, and the need for a middle tier role, fulfilled by local authorities. Read the report here: [Should we shed the middle tier?](#)

LGiU's Josephine Suherman has blogged on whether the al-Madinah free school case demonstrates the need for a middle tier role for local authorities. Read her blog [here](#).

[Lord Heseltine: Ministers should support 'failing' towns](#)

Former deputy Prime Minister Lord Heseltine has dismissed claims that "failing" towns and cities should be abandoned by the government, the [BBC](#) reported this week. Instead he argued that "the best way to stimulate economic growth in deprived towns and cities is to devolve more power away from Whitehall". Lord Heseltine was responding to an article in the [Economist](#), which suggested that Government efforts to save "decaying" industrial towns are "misguided" and that they should focus on helping the inhabitants.

LGiU this week

[House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee report on Community Budgets](#)

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee published its report on Community Budgets this week. Laura Wilkes, Policy Manager at LGiU, gave oral evidence to the Committee in May 2013. You can read the report [here](#), Laura's discussion of Our Place! Community Budgets [here](#), and a recent LGiU briefing [here](#).

[LGiU iTunes Channel Launched!](#)

We are excited to announce that our podcasts are now available for free, at any time, via our very own iTunes channel. Just search for LGiU in the iTunes store to listen. Alternatively, they can be accessed via our website [here](#).

The LGiU goes to Paris

This week the [Local Government Flood Forum](#) was in Paris to discuss progress on the [Rain Gain](#) project, which aims to improve urban flood management. Delegates from Lincolnshire County Council, Norfolk County Council, Essex County Council, and Malden District Council joined for the discussion and to see the potential benefits for local authorities.

Membership

Great visit this week to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. We heard from the Leader and Chief Executive about their positive stories on local growth, maintaining a thriving High Street as a "Portas Pilot", and their concerns about the challenges of welfare reform to communities and the economy. Also, excellent visit to Wolverhampton Council to discuss how to ensure effective policy input to the council's work. Invitations to visit our member councils are always welcome! We are continuing to expand our membership, with Colchester and Breckland councils starting free trials this week!

DCLG this week

[High Streets Renewal](#), High Streets Renewal October 23, 2013

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for London, Local Government and Planning, Brandon Lewis, launched a new report on community-led high street renewal.

[Report shows councils can make more online savings](#), October 24, 2013

Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis has called on councils to do more to make savings from putting services online.

[Local Digital Today](#), October 24, 2013

Results of research into councils' attitudes towards using digital to improve local public services.

[The only way is Essex at Communities and Local Government](#), 24 October, 2013

Secretary of State Eric Pickles hoisted the Essex county flag above the department to celebrate the important place English counties have in the nation's cultural heritage.

LGiU Briefings

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If you'd like to discuss full LGiU membership and access to all our briefings, please contact Chris.Naylor@lgiu.org.uk

If you'd like to discuss any of our briefings, please contact our Briefings Manager Janet Sillett at janet.sillett@lgiu.org.uk

The Rural Broadband Programme October 21 2013

This briefing reviews the Government's rural broadband programme and recent reports by the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee. Despite an investment of £1.2 billion, delivery of the Rural Broadband Programme is almost two years late, has failed to release the private sector contribution anticipated and proven both costly and problematic for local authorities.

The recommendations have implications for all rural authorities and authorities with rural areas. They are of specific relevance to rural ward members and Officers responsible for procurement, economic regeneration and strategic partnerships.

Home care and home care workers: recent reports from EHRC, Unison and Leonard Cheshire October 22 2013

A number of recent reports have drawn attention to the quality of home care for older and disabled people and to threats to their human rights and dignity.

All the reports are based on surveys of local authorities, service users and/or care workers and/or Freedom of Information requests to local authorities. The reports make links between the quality of care and the pay and conditions of home care workers.

Of particular concern are the lack of awareness among some local authorities and councillors of their responsibilities in relation to human rights legislation; the ceilings which some authorities are putting on the rates they will pay service providers which are putting downward pressure on pay; the fact that in some cases rates do not appear to be sufficient to enable the payment of the national minimum wage; and the fact that some care workers are not paid for the time they take to travel between visits.

Attention is also drawn to the question whether visits of 15 minutes or less are ever adequate to provide appropriate care – an issue which has been raised by Ministers.

The reports make a number of recommendations to local authorities and Government that could help address these issues.

This briefing will be of interest to local authorities with social services responsibilities.

Policy in Practice: How the NHS provider landscape is changing October 23 2013

Major changes to NHS providers in the coming years are inevitable but not entirely predictable. This policy in practice briefing looks at changes taking place six months after formal implementation of NHS reforms with examples from across England in the following areas:

- competition, tendering and mergers
- major reconfigurations.

The briefing also describes work towards long-term, whole-system change in NHS provision. It will be of interest to councils working with the local NHS to shape health and care services through health and wellbeing boards, to health overview and scrutiny, and to councillors with an interest in local NHS services.

Smart Cities October 24 2013

The smart city concept is mostly concerned with the variety of ways in which the management of urban environments is assisted by information technology. A large part of the concept hinges on the potential for information technology not only to collect and process data but to transform it into intelligence and to integrate it across services. On 9 October 2013, the Government announced the creation of a Smart Cities Forum. Accompanying the announcement of the Smart Cities Forum was the publication of a background paper, summarised here. The paper sets out the Government's ambitions for smart cities and how it hopes local government will help realise them. This briefing will be of interest to a wide range of officers and members in local government, but perhaps most particularly to those with an interest in corporate strategy, economic development, public health, transport, planning, and environmental sustainability. As the EU is rapidly developing its own policies for smart cities, there is also an interest in the potential for EU funding.

Ofsted Inspection of voluntary adoption agencies and independent fostering agencies, October 25, 2013

Ofsted has published new frameworks for the inspection of voluntary adoption agencies and of independent fostering agencies; they set out the evaluation schedules and grade descriptors, and took effect immediately on publication.

Upcoming briefings

Briefings over the next two weeks include:

- CLG Select Committee report on community budgets
- Reducing offending: Ministry of Justice report
- Government response to CLG select committee report on the
- Health, Public Health and Social Care round-up
- LEP European and Structural Fund investment strategies
- How Corrupt is Local Government? Transparency International
- State of the Nation 2013 Social mobility and child poverty in
- Energy policy update

- Social care inspections – the new regime
- Private rented sector report
- Great Britain report

Events

[Community Engagement in the Current Climate](#) 13 November 10:00 – 16:00

In this changing and challenging environment the ability of elected members and officers to involve and empower communities is now more important than ever. This is a down to earth seminar that will prompt frank debate and identify key issues facing frontline councillors. It will give participants plenty of opportunity to explore different approaches to engagement, which they can apply in their work as officers or local councillors.

Forthcoming LGiU Webinars

[LGiU Localism Webinar: Getting to know the new planning system – opportunities and tensions](#) 7 November 10:30 – 11:30

This webinar will sketch out the reformed planning system, and take stock of how it is influencing practice and shaping places. Are there advantages to this new system, and what are the unintended consequences and emerging tensions? This online webinar is free to LGiU members (places are limited).

[LGiU Localism Webinar: Localism and the Localism Act – where are we now?](#) 25 November 11:30 – 12:30

This webinar will look at the extent to which the aims of the Localism Act have been achieved and how far the changes have affected the role of councillors and what this will mean going forward. This online webinar is free to LGiU members (places are limited).

[Welfare Reform Webinar: Is welfare reform value for money? Findings from the NAO](#) 15 January 10:30 – 11:30

Part of a series of webinars looking at different aspects of the welfare reform agenda. The National Audit Office is currently carrying out a value for money study on this reform. In this webinar, the NAO study team will present their findings on the transition to the new system, and the risks and challenges for the future.

Forthcoming GlobalNet21/LGiU webinars

[GlobalNet21 and LGiU seminar: Police Commissioners, Local Authorities and Public Engagement](#), 19 November 12:30-16:40

In association with GlobalNet21: We will examine the importance to the Police Commissioner role of community engagement and participation. The seminar will look at the crucial experience that local authorities can bring to the table as part of the process, given their long history of engaging with local communities.

For more information about our events, please contact jane.sankarayya@lgiu.org.uk or see our listed events at www.lgiu.org.uk/events/