

# POLICY BULLETIN

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## Adam Thorp - Director of Policy and Corporate Services

All this recent good weather has felt like a welcome change, and it certainly feels like a great start to our organisation's new life as Local Government East (or LGE for short). For another new beginning, this will be the first of our Policy Bulletins! Below, you'll hear more about our collaboration, advocacy and much more of what we do for our member authorities in the East of England.

In this issue, experiences around social housing inspections are shared from our latest roundtable, along with the concerns being raised on the importance of regional coordination around water. Also, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution rumbles on, with LGE glad to hear back from the Minister on our requests for support for the sector. Finally, we also talk about what's happening in LGE itself – recent events, the publication of our business plan, and a bit about what's really caught our interest.

We hope you enjoy reading this, and that it gives you a snapshot of how, regardless of our name, we're still helping our member authorities be the best they can be for their communities in the East of England. We now look towards the Spending Review, and will share anything we learn...

## East of England Chief Executive Forum - Post Local Elections Thinking

Chief Executives from across the region gathered at Hertfordshire County Council in Stevenage for a quarterly in-person meeting. They heard key policy updates from both LGE and the LGA, such as the potential impacts of the recent local elections, and discussed with one another key points of interest such as the continuing process of local government reorganisation, and how the process is being managed within county footprints.



## London Plan Pre-Engagement

The Greater London Authority has begun its pre-engagement on the London Plan. After this consultation, they plan to publish the draft plan for statutory consultation in 2026, with final publication due approximately 2028. LGE is working with local planners to consider its response. [The consultation can be found on their website](#), and an LGE briefing [can be found on the LGE website](#).



## East of England Housing Delivery Group

Under its new chair, Alice Macdonald, the MP for Norwich North and Eastern Region Mission Champion, this group has undergone a refresh of its membership to boost collaboration within the region's housing sector and with government. The latest meeting raised the importance of the right kind of homes to meet local need, particularly genuinely affordable and supported housing.



## Water: Essential for life, essential for growth

After the driest spring since 1956, the mind is focused on the sight of parched grass, empty reservoirs, and the prospect of a dreaded hosepipe ban. The East of England is the driest region in the UK, and further water shortages could have large impacts on our economy and housing growth potential if things don't change.

However, it's not just a lack of supply. There are issues around pollution - illustrated by the nutrient neutrality issues faced by Norfolk - and concerns around coastal erosion given our long coastline home to key infrastructure. Counterintuitively, given the dryness of the region, flooding is also a critical issue that requires addressing due to our area's low-lying nature.

As planners, regulators, and chief executives are all talking to us about the need for regional engagement on water issues, we are keen to ensure that water remains high on our agenda. We're currently working with RAPID, a collaboration between the Environment Agency, the Clean Drinking Water Inspectorate, and Ofwat, to deliver a series of seminars on upcoming water infrastructure and funding. Furthermore, another Water Summit is being planned - more information will come soon!

## Healthy Homes: Sharing our insights

In May we joined the Department for Health and Social Care, alongside colleagues from Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Boards (ICB) and Colchester Borough Homes, to share the insights from our "Healthy Homes in the East of England" Report, published last December.



This report, an essential tool for system leaders wanting to better join up health and housing approaches and services in their areas, puts housing front and centre. By sharing some of the innovative partnerships addressing the link between housing and health in the region, we discussed the opportunities to build on this learning to reduce health inequalities.

We're delighted that Felicity Cox, Chief Executive for the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB, will be sharing more at the Housing Community Summit on 8 - 9 September in Liverpool organised by the National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing.

## What we're reading, what we're hearing



### **Matthew Stewart, Policy and Programme Manager - "The Unaccountability Machine" by Dan Davis**

"To say that a book about management science is interesting always feels disingenuous, but it's genuinely an entertaining read on the importance of system design over simple cost-benefit analysis, and how systems fail when the complexity of their environment exceeds their ability to interpret new data.

"All in all, it feels very relevant in local government, where costs and benefits are often hard to accurately measure and operating environments are becoming increasingly complex."



### **Kate O'Driscoll, Policy and Programme Manager - "Housing: The Hidden Key to Health - Making Housing Better"**

"This is a podcast from the Healthy Homes Hub which dives into a topic on the question of healthy homes each week. It can be found on Spotify for those who are interested."



# LGR and Devolution

In the context of a rapidly changing local and national government landscape, LGE is offering a range of support to our member councils and partners as they navigate devolution and local government reorganisation (LGR). As part of this offer, we're providing timely information and advocacy, accessible events and resources, and agile regional collaboration. Here are just some of our recent and upcoming activities.

## Information and Advocacy

We're keeping councils up to date on the latest from government and advocating on behalf of local councils in the region to government. We've have been liaising with officials within the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise awareness of the region's key asks. We have already written to the Secretary of State, Jim McMahon MP, on the subject of the kind of support needed by local authorities to make a success of local government reform and devolution. In his response to our letter, the Minister thanked the "hard work of... member authorities in preparing their interim plans."

## Events and resources

We're holding focussed virtual and in-person events on devolution and LGR to share ideas, lessons learned and the opportunities for the East of England, as well as helpful resources and tools. In particular, if you are looking for an opportunity to speak to experts in the field, or consult your colleagues in other local authorities on key questions, the following events may be useful:

- **LGE Virtual Roundtable Discussion: Navigating the Local Government Reorganisation Journey in the East** (24 June: 10.00 – 11.30)
- **LGE Virtual Roundtable Discussion: Navigating the Local Government Reorganisation Journey and Adult Social Care** (11 September: 10.00 – 11.30)
- **Local Government Essentials East: A Day of Discovery and Development, Safron Walden** - Featuring a full day of workshops led by our Talent Bank Taskforce offering information and guidance on a range of Devolution and LGR related topics for HR leads (7 October 09.00 – 15.30)
- **Devolution Opportunities for the East of England** - Huntingdon (Invitation Only) (4 November 10.00 – 14.00)

## Regional Collaboration

We're working closely with our existing regional groups and strategic partnerships to consider the impact of Devolution and LGR in key service areas including climate change, infrastructure and planning, housing and homelessness, and health and wellbeing.

## Upcoming consultations and government events

Spending Review phase 2: 11/06/25 including:

- Infrastructure strategy
- Local growth funding reform
- Children's social care and SEND funding reform

London Plan Pre-engagement: 22/06/25

Planning Reform consultations:

- Build out transparency: 07/07/25
- Speeding up buildout: 07/07/25
- Reforming site thresholds: 09/07/25
- Modernising planning committees: 23/07/25







# Preparing for Housing Inspections - LGE Roundtable findings

Run in association with  MadeTech Housing

With the regulation of social housing becoming more and more prominent, we considered it important to ensure that our member authorities would be as prepared as possible. To that end, we asked Angela Holden, the Director of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator for Social Housing, to explain how an inspection takes place, and what would be asked of a stock holding local authority or housing association as part of such an inspection. ◀◀◀

We also had representatives from Dacorum and Stevenage councils - two authorities who have already been through the inspection process - who offered insightful and informative views as a Director of Property and a Portfolio Holder for Housing. They had the chance to outline what they had learned, and how they had improved as a result, sharing their top tips.

We were grateful that MadeTech UK, our roundtable sponsor, were able to attend to offer their expertise on tech solutions around housing data. The breakout discussions were led by LGE Talent Bank Associates, where member authorities could talk about their preparedness for housing inspections. The key take aways included:

- The scale of the challenge of maintaining old social housing stock
- A recognition that the inspection is ultimately about people and how they live
- The need to work across teams within the council at all levels, with both officers and councillors including Leaders
- The need to really understand and maintain the housing data
- The need to maintain strong relationships and governance arrangements with registered providers.

To view the presentations from the speakers, please look on our website, or visit our website and look under Housing and Homelessness. If your council is looking for bespoke support from our associates in preparation for and/or following a social housing inspection please contact our Talent Bank team at [talentbank@localgoveeasteng.gov.uk](mailto:talentbank@localgoveeasteng.gov.uk)

## Upcoming Events

- [NSIP Centre of Excellence Conference](#): 11/06/25
- [LGE Roundtable on Local Growth Funding Reform](#): 09/07/25
- [East of England Net Zero and Climate Conference](#): 16/07/25

## LGE's Business Plan Launched

Along with a complete rebrand, we have published our new 2025-28 business plan - "Fit for the future, delivering for the East". [Available online](#), it sets out our key priorities for the next three years, including:

1. Adapting and responding in an agile way to meet the needs of our members, providing consistent support, capacity and resource in the context of a rapidly changing landscape
2. Being a strong and unified voice for the East
3. Building and nurturing partnerships and networks to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for our region



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