

Annual Report

2025-2026



Local
Government
East



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About Us

We are the cross-party, politically led membership body representing local government in the East of England. We currently have all 50 councils in our region and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority in membership.



Chair's reflection on 2025-26



As I reflect on the past year at Local Government East, I am struck by both the pace of change and the strength of collective leadership shown across our region. 2025-26 has been a year defined by opportunity, challenge, and renewed purpose, with our organisation continuing to play a vital role in convening partners, amplifying the voice of the sector, and supporting councils through significant transformation.

A central theme of the year has been our support to the sector on local government reorganisation. Local Government East has worked closely with members and partners to provide practical guidance, spaces for peer learning, and a strong, coordinated regional voice into national discussions. I am proud of the way our member networks, and officer-led groups have stepped up to share insight and experience, helping to ensure that reorganisation is informed, collaborative, and focused on delivering the best outcomes for residents.

Alongside this, we have continued to create opportunities for strategic conversation and influence. In March, our Infrastructure and Investment Conference showcased the East as a region of opportunity and potential. The conference brought together investors, policymakers, and local leaders to focus on the infrastructure priorities that underpin economic growth and community wellbeing. The voice of councils was front and centre, demonstrating the sector's readiness to work in partnership to unlock investment and deliver sustainable development.

Throughout the year, we have remained committed to our core role as a trusted convener and advocate. Whether through our networks and events, policy briefings, or advocacy activity, we have sought to ensure that councils across the East are well-equipped to respond to immediate pressures while also shaping the longer-term future of the region.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and professionalism of our members, officers, and the Local Government East team. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed their time, expertise, and leadership over the past year. In a context of significant change, the willingness to collaborate and support one another has been one of our greatest strengths.

Graham Butland,
Chair of Local Government East and Member,
Braintree District Council

Our Vision, Mission and Values:

Our Vision:

Our vision is to support our member authorities to create a thriving, resilient, and inclusive East of England, recognised for its value nationally. At the heart of everything we do are our members, whose needs and priorities drive our efforts.

Our Mission:

Through collaboration and partnership, we support our member authorities in the East of England to be the best they can be by providing expertise, advocacy, and resources to tackle today's and tomorrow's challenges. We will remain agile and flexible, ready for change and fit for the future.

Our Values:

At Local Government East we are:

R

Resilient

We can adapt to change. We support each other and our member authorities to respond to change. We share knowledge, equip and develop our people. We understand the need to adapt our actions and behaviours in response to a changing climate.

I

Inclusive

We are an inclusive workplace where employees are respected, involved, have a sense of belonging and are valued for the experiences they bring.

S

Supportive

Of each other, our members and of all with whom we work.

E

Empowering

We trust our people to do their jobs and provide the support and environment they need to thrive. We work in an agile and flexible way, recognising that people have different needs. We take an outcome-based approach.

#togetherweRISE

Summary of Achievements

9

virtual roundtables, with a total of 340 attendees



423

people supported by the Employability for Overseas Nationals project

6

Chief Executive appraisals



91

Talent Bank projects completed



3 **events**

on water issues in the region with 176 attendees



675

Unaccompanied **Asylum Seeking Children** supported in the region



3

commercial events delivered

11

thematic networks facilitated for 325 officers



21

Talent Bank training sessions delivered to 200+ officers and members



33

councils using the Infinistats HR benchmarking system



4

Government Ministers and 20+ MPs directly engaged with



4

Government consultations responded to

1400

people registered for informal English sessions



22

core events delivered for our members



2,793

refugees resettled under UK Resettlement Scheme and Afghan schemes



73

apprentices involved in the Apprentice of the Year event



Key Highlights

Opportunity East: One Year On

In 2025, Local Government East published “Opportunity East: One Year On”, building on the momentum of the original 2024 Opportunity East report and reaffirming the East of England’s central role in delivering national growth, clean energy, and sustainable development. Produced in partnership with the East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group, Transport East, England’s Economic Heartland, Chambers East, the East of England Energy Group, and Water Resources East, the report reflects a uniquely collaborative, pan-regional approach to shaping the area’s future.

The report also reinforces Local Government East’s leadership role in convening partners and advocating for the region on the national stage. By bringing together diverse voices, it positions the East of England as a coherent, investable proposition with a compelling story to tell.

The report demonstrates the scale of opportunity across the region and a clear, evidence-led narrative on how the East of England can continue to act as a driver of UK prosperity, while responding to pressing challenges around housing, water resilience, and transport capacity.

The publication was formally launched at the East of England APPG Parliamentary Reception, where it received strong cross-party endorsement including commendation from Baroness Smith of Basildon, Leader of the House of Lords. MPs from across the region welcomed its clarity and ambition and praised the report’s focus on delivering tangible outcomes for communities and businesses.



Through Opportunity East: One Year On, Local Government East and its partners have demonstrated the power of collaboration in shaping regional success, ensuring the East remains at the forefront of the UK's economic and clean energy future.



LGR Roundtables

As councils navigated the complexities and opportunities presented by local government reorganisation, LGE convened two virtual roundtables dedicated to this significant change. The first, held in June 2025, provided leaders and senior officers with the opportunity to hear from Philips Simpkins, former chief executive of Bedford Borough Council and LGE Talent Bank Associate, who shared his end-to-end experience of reorganisation, alongside key lessons learned.

The second roundtable, held in September, explored the specific challenges for Adult Services in the region during the LGR transition. Chaired by Colin Ansell, Chief Executive of Southend-on-Sea City Council and LGE Regional Lead for Adult Services, this session brought together councillors and officers to hear from LGR experienced Directors who have already navigated the implications for Adult Services and to reflect on their insights.

LGR Officer Networks

In 2025–26, Local Government East played a pivotal role in supporting councils through ongoing local government reorganisation by convening a series of new officer networks. These networks brought together senior and operational officers from across the region to share practical learning, insights and address common challenges.

Designed to be responsive and peer-led, the networks focused on key areas impacted by reorganisation. Participants benefited from a trusted environment to exchange emerging practice, test ideas, and learn from authorities at different stages of reorganisation.

Local Government East facilitated regular meetings, expert input sessions, and collaborative problem-solving discussions, ensuring that councils could access timely guidance and maintain momentum in complex programmes of change. The networks also strengthened relationships across organisations, fostering a culture of collective leadership and mutual support.

As reorganisation continues to evolve, Local Government East's officer networks have become an essential mechanism for building capacity, sharing expertise, and supporting resilient, future-ready local government structures across the region.

With effect from March 2026, Heads of HR meetings for the region were expanded to include specific time for LGR discussion, sharing good practice and updates on progress in each county area. We have also set up a Basecamp facility for all HR Teams to utilise to share documents and communicate with one another about LGR.



Infrastructure and Investment Conference 2026 – Turning Ambition into Delivery

In March 2026, Local Government East co-hosted the second Opportunity East: Infrastructure and Investment Conference at The Hold in Ipswich, bringing together senior leaders from across local government, industry, and infrastructure providers to shape a unified vision for the region's future. The conference reinforced the East of England's collective ambition to secure the infrastructure investment needed to unlock long-term growth and prosperity.

A defining moment of the day was the launch of Invest East by Jack Abbott MP, establishing a new, coordinated inward investment proposition for the region. Building on a £4 billion pipeline of investment-ready opportunities, Invest East, of which Local Government East is an inaugural member, positions the East of England as a globally competitive destination and provides a single platform to attract public and private investment at scale.

Speakers and delegates highlighted the East's national significance as one of the UK's fastest-growing regions and the persistent challenge of underinvestment.

Afternoon workshop sessions provided a practical focus, with delegates working through a series of challenge statements to identify barriers and solutions. The post-event report captured a strong consensus across these discussions:

the need for greater alignment between infrastructure projects, skills and investment planning, faster delivery of strategic projects, and a more coordinated regional voice to secure national funding and policy support. It also emphasised the importance of unlocking private capital, strengthening supply chains, and ensuring infrastructure investment is closely linked to clean energy opportunities, innovation and long-term economic growth.



Devolution in the East

As part of LGE's efforts to support greater devolution of powers and funding to local areas, we worked with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the emerging strategic authorities in the region to help maximise the benefits of the Government's English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill (Act 2026).



Our 'Devolution in the East' event (4 November, Huntingdon), held with the CPCA and Huntingdonshire District Council brought together public sector leaders to explore the opportunities for strengthening regional collaboration and improving the lives of people in the East. Chaired by Cllr Richard Siddall, LGE Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, the event featured speakers including Mayor Paul Bristow, Sir Norman Lamb and Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive Jan Thomas alongside contributors from MHCLG, the Health Foundation, and the West Midlands Combined Authority. Vital regional messages emerged:

- Devolved powers over housing, transport, and skills will help drive inclusive economic growth and reduce significant health inequalities across the region.
- Mayors working together with Local Government East, councils, subnational transport bodies, the NHS and strategic regional partners can unite the East as a single, powerful "Team East" voice on the national stage.



Launch of New Website Strengthens Local Government East's Digital Presence

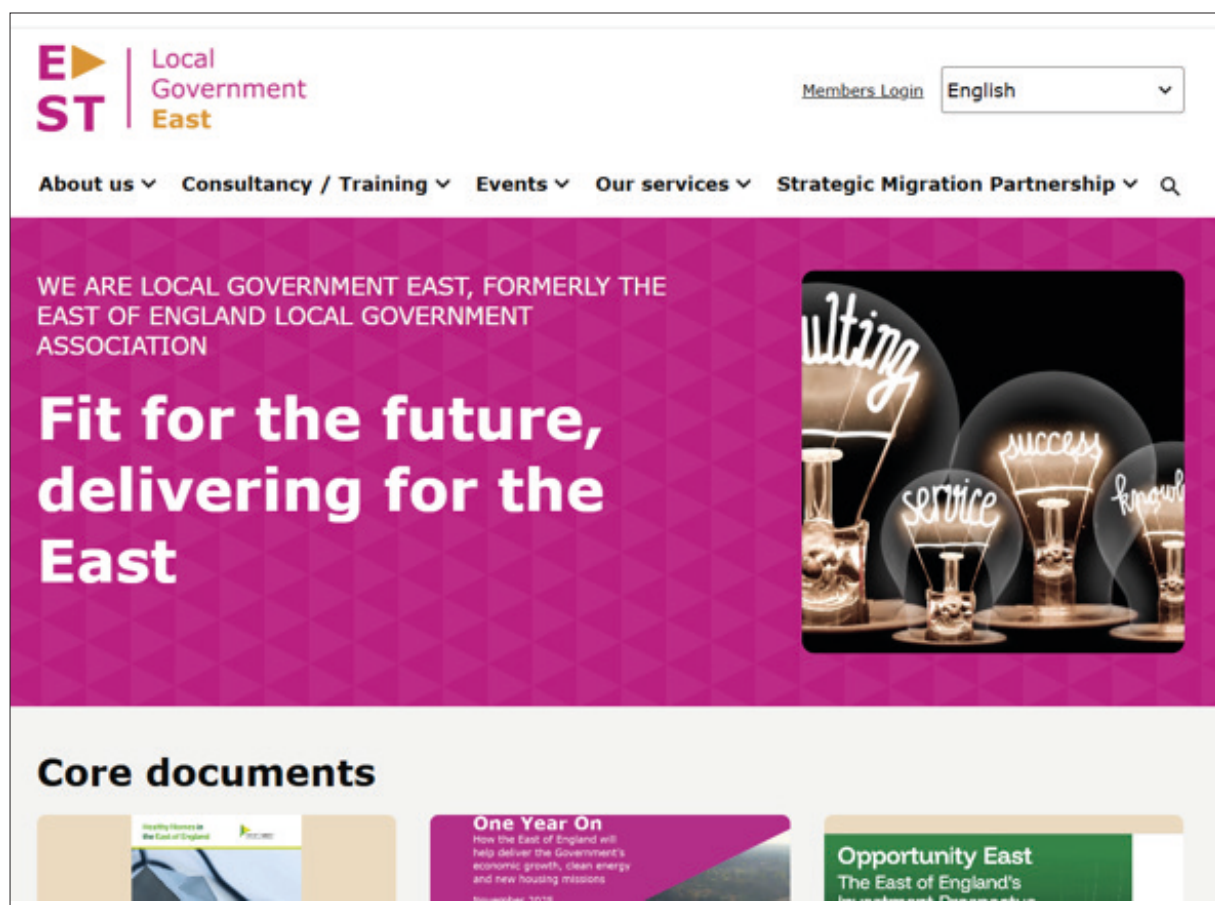
As part of the ongoing evolution of the organisation, in June 2025, LGE successfully launched its new website, marking a significant milestone in the organisation's ongoing commitment to accessibility, transparency, and member engagement. The redesigned platform provides an improved user experience, ensuring that local authorities, partners, and stakeholders can more easily access information, resources, and support.

The new website has been developed with a clear focus on usability and functionality. Its modern design and streamlined navigation enable visitors

to quickly find relevant content, from policy publications to training opportunities and upcoming events.

Importantly, the platform strengthens LGE's ability to showcase its work and impact. There is also a members' only area of the website that includes specific resources and content for LGE's member authorities.

Feedback from users since the launch has been positive, with stakeholders highlighting the clarity of the design and ease of navigation. LGE will continue to refine and enhance the website in response to user needs,



Apprentice of the Year Event

On 21st and 22nd May 2025, 73 Level 2 and 3 local government apprentices from across England and Wales took part in the Apprentice of the Year event.

Building on the success of previous events, all those participating were either current apprentices or qualified within the last 12 months. This year's event was themed around housing, with each activity designed to draw on that theme while helping to develop successful workplace behaviours, linked to a range of apprenticeship standards.

Eve Hind from Durham County Council was our winner. As well as Eve's individual success, awards were also presented to the three joint runners up, Anya Stevens, Plymouth City Council, Leo Thomas, Three Rivers District Council and Jessica Brooman, Isle of Wight Council and the winning team, who were judged by a panel of communications professionals from across local government on a creative communications document.

A prize for the on-the-day social media competition was also presented to Jake Snell, East Suffolk Council.



Launch of Region's First Investment Prospectus

Partners from across the East of England came together to produce an Opportunity East Investment Prospectus which was launched at UKREiif 2025.

The prospectus, coordinated by White Hawk Green, supported by LGE and Chambers East and sponsored by Kanda Consulting, contains key selling points of the region, and a list of eight investor-ready projects seeking interest from the private sector.

The document demonstrates that the East of England is a fantastic place to invest in. The region is the second largest in England by land area and is home to world-renowned institutions such as Cambridge's Biomedical Hub, Adastral Park's digital cluster, and leading food research centres in Norfolk. It's also a key contributor to growth in the UK, as it's home to several key industries that the Government has identified as crucial within its Industrial Strategy.

Following the launch, many of the projects promoted have subsequently received interest from international investors.



Inside Housing Event

In September, LGE Policy and Programme Manager, Kate O'Driscoll joined an Inside Housing Roundtable at the Royal College of Nursing. Forming part of Inside Housing's Healthy Homes campaign, panellists from local government, ICBs, housing associations, and academia discussed what housing actions are needed for better health.

Building on the principles set out in LGE's report Healthy Homes in the East (December 2024), Kate addressed the need for a 'golden thread' between practitioners and system leaders and a shared understanding of respective contributions for improving homes to improve people's health.



Local Government and NHS Regional Collaboration

Senior leaders from the region's ICBs, NHS England, Public Health, Adult and Children's Services met in October to explore the implications of the Government's 10 Year Health Plan and Devolution Bill (Act 2026) for health and care outcomes. Chaired by Laura Church, Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council and Regional Lead Chief Executive for Health and Wellbeing, the group identified the risks and opportunities arising from changing local government and ICB footprints, alongside major policy reforms such as the Children's Health and Wellbeing Bill. LGE is working with NHSE East of England to strengthen regional leadership and build closer working relationships across Local Government and the NHS.

Integrated Care Boards East of England



East of England

- 1 Greater Essex
- 2 Suffolk and Norfolk
- 3 Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; and Hertfordshire

Forward look from our Chief Executive



This has been a pivotal year for Local Government East and for the authorities we represent.

Across the region, the direction of travel is now clearer. Local government reorganisation advances at pace and devolution continues to progress.

Our focus throughout 2025–26 has been to ensure that we are ready for that change — and, crucially, that our members are supported at every stage of the journey.

A central part of this has been our most extensive programme of member engagement to date. What we have heard has been clear: while the pace of change is significant, so too is the opportunity to strengthen local leadership, improve delivery, and secure better outcomes for our communities.

This engagement is already shaping how we operate, and it will continue through 2026–27 to ensure that our offer remains relevant, responsive, and fit for the future.

As a cross-party, politically led membership body, our role is both simple and vital: to be the voice of local government in the East of England, and a practical partner to our members. We are strengthening collaboration across the region, so that we can speak with a more unified and confident voice.

I am proud of the way our members have responded to the challenges and opportunities of the past year — with leadership, pragmatism and a strong commitment to their places.

Looking ahead, I am confident that Local Government East will continue to play a central role in supporting our members to continue to respond in the same manner.

Together, we will ensure that the East of England remains a region defined not only by its growth, but by the strength of its local leadership and the resilience of its communities.

Cairistine Foster-Cannan
Chief Executive

Thank you to sponsors and partners

One of our driving principles at LGE is collaboration and partnership working. We could not have achieved as much as we did in 2025-26 without the support of our amazing partner organisations and sponsors.

We would like to say a huge thank you to the following organisations for their support in 2025-26.

Sponsors

- Jacobs
- Skanska
- Health Innovation East
- Morgan Sindall
- Opus People Solutions
- Crown Commercial Services
- Freeport East
- First Bus
- MadeTech

Partners

- | | |
|---|---|
| The East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group | Confederation of British Industry |
| Transport East | Infinistats |
| England’s Economic Heartland | National Association of Regional Employers |
| Chambers East | South West Councils |
| NHSEngland – East of England | West Midlands Employers |
| Association of Directors of Adult Social Services | North West Employers |
| Association of Directors of Children’s Services | East Midlands Councils |
| Association of Directors of Public Health | South East Employers |
| Local Government Association | South East Councils |
| Local Councils Network | Yorkshire and Humber Local Authorities Employers’ Association |
| County Councils Network | London Councils |
| Build East | White Hawk Green |



