



**ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Inaugural Meeting of the APPG on Local Government
Minutes

Tuesday 12 November 2024, 12:00-13:00 | Room O, Portcullis House

Attendees/ APPG group members

1. James Asser MP (Labour)
2. David Baines MP (Labour)
3. Paula Barker MP (Labour)
4. Lord Best (Crossbench)
5. Clive Betts MP (Labour)
6. Kevin Bonavia MP (Labour)
7. Jonathan Brash MP (Labour)
8. Deirdre Costigan MP (Labour)
9. Jonathan Davies MP (Labour)
10. Jim Dickson MP (Labour)
11. Lee Dillon MP (Liberal Democrat)
12. Will Forster MP (Liberal Democrat)
13. Daniel Francis MP (Labour)
14. Gill Furness MP (Labour)
15. Baroness Golding MP (Labour)
16. Marie Goldman MP (Liberal Democrat)
17. Paulette Hamilton MP (Labour)
18. Lord Haselhurst (Conservative)
19. Simon Hoare MP (Conservative)
20. Rachel Hopkins MP (Labour)
21. Natasha Irons MP (Labour)
22. James Naish MP (Labour)
23. Toby Perkins MP (Labour)
24. Vikki Slade MP (Liberal Democrat)
25. John Taylor of Holbeach (Labour)
26. Sean Woodcock MP (Labour)

External stakeholders present

- Dr Jonathan Carr-West, Local Government Information Unit (Group secretariat)
- Jen Pufky, Local Government Information Unit (Group secretariat)

Members not present

Jack Abbott MP (Labour)
Cat Eccles MP (Labour)
Sarah Hall MP (Labour)
Sojan Joseph MP (Labour)
Ayoub Khan MP (Independent)
Peter Lamb MP (Labour)
Lord Naseby (Conservative)
Darren Paffey MP (Labour)

2024 Officers

1. Chair - Clive Betts MP (Labour)
2. Vice-Chair - Simon Hoare MP (Conservative)
3. Vice-Chair - Paulette Hamilton MP (Labour)
4. Vice-Chair - Baroness Golding (Labour)

Meeting summary

Welcome and introduction

The Chair (Paulette Hamilton MP) welcomed attendees to the Inaugural Meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Local Government and verified that the meeting was quorate. The Chair thanked the secretariat for organising the meeting and gave a brief overview to re-establish the group and its purpose which is to bring together interested members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords to discuss and find solutions to issues that are affecting local government. The Chair confirmed the APPG's name and proceeded with the election of the APPG's officers and Chair.

Election of APPG Officers

During the meeting, the election of APPG officers took place. Paulette Hamilton MP nominated Clive Betts MP to be Chair which was seconded and he was elected as Chair of the group.

Paulette Hamilton MP was nominated by Clive Betts MP to return as a Vice-chair of the group and was seconded and she was elected as Vice-Chair.

Simon Hoare MP was nominated by Clive Betts MP to become a Vice-chair of the group and was seconded and he was elected as Vice-chair.

Baroness Golding was nominated by Paulette Hamilton MP and seconded and duly elected as Vice-chair.

Presentation by Jonathan Carr-West, LGIU - Overview of the local government landscape in 2024

During the discussion, Dr Jonathan Carr-West provided a background on the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) and LGIUs work in supporting the group. He emphasised local government is at a critical point, and with the diverse local government backgrounds present, there is significant potential to drive change ahead and cultivate an enabling environment going forward.

Toby Perkins MP responded that the group has a tremendous role to play in supporting the sector, as there is a danger that we reach the point where we think that all councils are in crisis.

The importance of an APPG like this was reiterated alongside the pressures that local government faces. During the last parliament, it was reminded that it reached a crisis point, underscoring the urgency of this work.

Q&A and discussion led by the newly elected Chair, Clive Betts MP

Following Dr Jonathan Carr-West's presentation, Clive Betts MP as the newly elected Chair led a Q&A and discussion.

Jonathan Davis MP first welcomed the opportunity to deliberate the complexity of local government. There exists an information gap regarding the structure and layers of local government, and the public do not particularly have a good grasp of this. He also raised the point that many councils are committed to net zero by 2030.

Lee Dillon MP concurred and said how in Newbury, his constituency, there is pressure on unitary authorities to deliver new services like a swimming pool, but the public does not see or understand the pressures.

Dan Francis MP served as a councillor for several years and brought his valuable experience to the discussions. Key issues raised included the clearing of the audit backlog affecting many local authorities, with Section 114 notices looming as the

statutory override is set to expire in March 2026. It was highlighted as critical to resolve and an issue that is faced by councils of all political affiliations.

Paulette Hamilton MP raised an important point on how the lack of rights for councillors could dissuade the best people from running in local politics. Currently, there are no maternity provisions or pension schemes. The point is raised that because of these significant factors, councillors end up in poverty.

James Naish MP discussed how local government is competing for a limited pool of talent, stressing the importance of government to promote national training schemes to help local government.

Paul Barker, MP for Liverpool, stressed two issues in her area: the lack of recognition for social care and the misunderstanding that it is funded by the NHS fuelled by the conversations on 'joined-up working'. Alongside this, she raised the alarming increases in temporary accommodations in Liverpool, and warned that many councils are at the risk of bankruptcy without a coherent multi year settlement.

Will Forster MP highlighted the confusion around what local government is and the services it provides, specifically questioning whether services like community meals should be provided by local government or be self-financed. He also raised Citizens Advice centres and that his local one is at risk of closing, which will impact neighbouring constituencies who are also facing minimal service provision.

Natasha Irons MP noted that councils are facing issues around governance and scrutiny, as well as the need for a greater retention rate of councillors and officers. She highlighted that devolving more power to local government must come with control measures in place to hold officers to account.

David Baines MP discussed the significance of devolution and the role of mayors going forward. He highlighted the need for local leaders to be involved in decision-making and discussions at the national-level.

Simon Hoare MP, with 16 years experience across district and parish councils, underscored the importance of local government funding and mentioned the growing number of houses in areas makes it difficult to secure funding. He highlighted that financial innovation does not only have to be used to make savings, but in dynamic and different ways to improve local government services. He highlighted a piece of work he and Jacob Young were going to carry out that explored communication issues in local government like in Cambridge where 7 transport planners had no requirements to communicate with one another.

Jim Dickinson MP spoke on the broken funding system and the impacts on housing, public health and social care, advocating for a broader and holistic understanding of how local government can provide these essential services given the limitations. The point is raised that this is not only about council tax reform, and it shouldn't be the sole focus of local government finance.

James Asser MP discussed the financial challenges facing his own constituency, highlighting the £17m of the £40m overspend went towards temporary accommodation costs. He argued for a more holistic approach to addressing these issues and someone should map out how various local government issues fit together in order to create a sustainable approach to fixing local government.

Decisions: A new APPG on Local Government Growth was formed recently it was suggested this APPG should be in communication with them. And, working alongside the HSC Committee and MHCLG, this APPG should agree its programme for the year ahead with officers. Also, the issue of fly-tipping was raised as an important consideration going forward and again another APPG on this topic for the group to communicate with.

Close

The Chair thanked participants for attending the Inaugural meeting of the APPG and for their contributions before closing the meeting.