

A weekly round up of local government news in the East Midlands brought to you by East Midlands Councils

Top items this week

16 JULY 2021



Government strategy to regenerate high streets



New 'County Deals' to devolve power to local communities



Kickstart - EMC employability support sessions



EMC Events for Councillors and Officers

PM sets out new 'County Deals' to devolve power to local communities in Levelling Up speech

PM Boris Johnson set out his vision and further detail on how the government would deliver on their commitment to "level up and unite the whole of the United Kingdom" in a speech yesterday:

- Empower strong local leaders by taking a more flexible approach to devolution, with new 'County Deals'
- Focus on growing the private sector by creating the conditions for long-term growth and productivity;
- Invest in infrastructure and connectivity;
- Ensure that people have access to good public services, and the skills and training needed to get good jobs; and
- Improve the quality of life in communities through cutting crime and regenerating towns and high streets

Ahead of the publication of the White Paper in the Autumn, which will include more details on the government's approach, the Prime Minister also used this opportunity to announce a series of interventions to help deliver the aim of levelling up the UK [details [here](#)].

Devolution - New 'County Deals' to take devolution beyond the largest cities, offering the rest of England the same powers metro mayors have gained over things like transport, skills and economic support.

- **The Prime Minister's Levelling Up speech: 15 July 2021** - Available from [here](#).
- **Letter from Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives and Mayors** - [here](#).

Government strategy to regenerate high streets

Councils in England will be given the power to transform towns, taking over derelict buildings through compulsory purchase orders so they can be converted into new homes if property owners stall on regeneration plans. Councils will also be encouraged to use existing powers to convert empty offices into housing, and empty shops will be transformed into entertainment venues or thriving new businesses without the need for planning permission.

New funding will be committed for 'mini-Holland' schemes across England to embed greener forms of transport, encouraging cycling and walking by installing segregated cycle lanes on main roads, expanding space for pedestrians and creating low-traffic neighbourhoods.

A new taskforce will work to eradicate chewing gum from the streets, with gum producers investing £10 million over the next 5 years to help fund councils to clean up gum from the streets and support schemes to prevent people from littering in the first place. New guidance for councils in England to manage graffiti will be published giving examples of good practice, drawing on the latest research and professional expertise and highlighting the importance of keeping high-streets clean and clear of graffiti.

Government funding will be available to save local venues loved by a community. Details have been published setting out how community groups across the UK can bid for up to £250,000 in matched funding from the £150 million [Community Ownership Fund](#) to take over local pubs, theatres, shops and sports grounds at risk of closure.

Hospitality will also be given a boost with the streamlined pavement licensing system extended for 12 months across England so more shops, cafes and restaurants can make use of outdoor areas, with an intention to make this permanent [further details available from [here](#)].

Build Back Better High Streets - This strategy sets out the government's plan for high streets and how high streets and town centres can adapt and thrive after the COVID-19 pandemic [details [here](#)].

EMC News

Shortage of HGV Drivers - Many local authorities are reporting increasing concerns regarding the lack of HGV drivers and the potential impact on local services, particularly refuse collection and food industries. We are working with MHCLG to gauge the extent of these concerns and any local intelligence/examples would be much appreciated. Please email Stuart.Young@emcouncils.gov.uk

EMC Support Activity

Kickstart - Last week, EMC delivered the first of a series of employability support sessions for the young people benefitting from the Kickstart Scheme and their employing local authorities. Focusing on how to make the most out of their placement the individuals attending were highly engaged and motivated to learn and make a difference. Further sessions of support will focus on teamwork and communications and preparing for future work. For more information and/or to benefit from the Kickstart Scheme please contact Suzanne Boultyby – Suzanne.boultyby@emcouncils.gov.uk

EM Virtual Exchange, Future/Agile Working Arrangements & Approaches following Lifting of COVID Restrictions - EMC is hosting a Virtual Exchange on **Thursday 29th July from 2.30-3.30pm**. The meeting will provide an opportunity to hear from HR colleagues at Nottingham City Council on their workplace transformation programme which aims to see the authority transition through a future ways of working programme with their employees.

This meeting will also be an opportunity for authorities to share their current approaches on workplace and working arrangements, following the lifting of COVID-related restrictions and rules on 19th July when we reach the next stage of the Government's Roadmap.

If you would like to participate in the Exchange on 29 July, please email mila.pereira@emcouncils.gov.uk by 23 July.

EMC Councillor Events

Virtual Communication Skills for Councillors, 23 September 2021- EMC is offering a one-hour virtual communication session for Councillors. This one-hour session offers an interactive introduction to online communication skills [details [here](#)]. While set in the virtual environment the course content will be applicable to communication in the face to face environment.

The focused session explore the following all set within the virtual environment; Awareness of online communication skills; Engagement, perception and impact; Warmth; Gestures; and Behaviour and reputation.

Infrastructure, Planning & Housing

Government publishes 'greenprint' to decarbonise all modes of domestic transport by 2050 - Transport decarbonisation plan for cleaner air, healthier communities and tens of thousands of new green jobs [details [here](#)].

- government launches Transport decarbonisation plan to create cleaner, quieter cities and communities for better quality of life and to improve the way people and goods move around
- plan includes consulting on world-leading pledge to end the sale of all new, polluting road vehicles by 2040 and net zero aviation emissions by 2050
- smart electric vehicle charging that could reduce energy bills, and a commitment to electrify the entire fleet of government cars and vans by 2027, highlight ambition to tackle emissions

Rail Minister launches forum to help rough sleepers - Forum on rough sleeping on rail launched to help safeguard the most vulnerable people in the community and end homelessness. A pilot scheme is being run by Shelter on behalf of Network Rail to support those in need. As part of the pilot, Shelter has trained a number of Network Rail staff to connect with the people they encounter sleeping rough and refer them to Shelter's expert services [details [here](#)].

Midlands Connect

Second round of Major Road Network (MRN) Preparation Fund - Midlands Connect has announced the second round of Major Road Network (MRN) Preparation Fund to support the development of new MRN schemes. This funding is available for the Midlands Connect's Local Highway Authority partners wishing to explore developing a scheme for consideration in MRN Period 2 (MRN2). This is the second round of the three years rolling funding first announced by Midlands Connect in August 2020. This funding is formed with the intention to build-up a sizable 'pool' of credible MRN Scheme business cases that the region can then prioritise for submission to Department for Transport when the next MRN fund and Regional Evidence Base process is called; the date for which is unknown at this stage.

Further details of funding, eligibility criteria and other supplementary information are included in a document available from [here](#).

The interested authorities are requested to submit their response **before the submission deadline of 3rd September 2021**. The response to this funding call as well as the recommendations for funding award will be made to the Steering Group in the Midlands Connects Steering Group meeting scheduled at the end September. The announcement on funding award is likely to be made in October 2021. Submissions should be made by email addressed to SwatiMittal@midlandsconnect.uk and Lauraspinks@midlandsconnect.uk before the submission deadline.

Climate Change and Sustainable Development

National Audit Office 'Local government and net zero in England' - This new report responds to a request from the Environmental Audit Committee to examine local government and net zero [available from [here](#)].

A local-national partnership to deliver low-carbon infrastructure, Thursday 29 July 2021, 10.30am - This webinar presents LGA-commissioned research by WPI Economics to produce a business case for how such a partnership can maximise economic, social and environmental benefits of a local approach to delivering low carbon infrastructure projects [details [here](#)].

Employers' Information

COVID Update, Step 4 Changes for Employers - As COVID restrictions are removed from Monday 19 July, BEIS have updated the [guidance on working safely](#) that updates the previous 'COVID-secure' workplaces guidance. The LGA guidance has been updated and a local government services' NJC Circular will be available very soon [LGA Guidance available [here](#) a short summary is available from [here](#)]. An email was sent by the LGA to local authorities' schools teams this morning.

COVID-19 Workforce Survey research report, week ending 4 June 2021- This LGA report is part of a series of monthly surveys of all councils in England and Wales collecting key workforce data on how the sector is responding to COVID-19 [details [here](#)].

Local Government News

System of local government audit close to "breaking point" - In a report published this week the Commons Public Accounts Committee says Government's oversight of local government audit has become "increasingly complacent" with less than half of local authority audits meeting the deadline for completion in 2019-20, and half of audits examined by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) needing "more than limited" improvement. The local audit market is "now entirely reliant upon only eight firms, two of which are responsible for up to 70% of local authority audits." [here](#).

Must Know: Online harms - The purpose of this LGA guide is to raise awareness about online harms and empower councillors by providing an introduction to online risks, an overview of the Online Safety Bill, key considerations, signposting to useful resources, as well as a checklist to support effective decision making [details [here](#)].

Councillor Handbook: Taxi and PHV Licensing - This LGA handbook will help you understand some of the key issues concerning taxi and PHV licensing. It is intended to be used as a starting point to explain some of the difficulties that can arise in this complex area of business regulation, but is not a replacement for the training provided by your own authority [details [here](#)].

Health & Social Care

Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK - The official UK government website for data and insights on coronavirus (COVID-19) including data on Testing, cases and vaccinations. With case information by region and local authorities [\[here\]](#).

Independent review of drugs: prevention, treatment and recovery - Dame Carol Black published her report last week [on part two of her independent review of drugs](#), focusing on drug prevention, treatment and recovery. A government response to the report is expected soon. We are pleased to have supported Dame Carol's review and welcome its powerful findings [details [here](#)].

EMC Events

EMC Leadership Development Programme, cohort two - EMC are offering the opportunity to join the programme, with new dates starting in October 2021. The overall aim of this unique and focused programme is to provide senior and middle managers with the skills, knowledge, and capability to lead their people through turbulent times. Delivered virtually, this programme provides a flexible approach to learning through short webinars, action learning and a resource library, which address key issues and provide practical tools to support managers.

Developed around four key themes of Self Leadership, Leading the Organisation, Leading People and Leading Teams, this programme will help leaders and managers to:

- Develop self-awareness of their own leadership and resilience during turbulence and change.
- Respond to the challenges a crisis and long-term uncertainty create for organisations, teams, and people.
- Identify ways in which organisations can build their resilience, adapt to change, and engage their people during turbulent times.
- Address key challenges when leading and managing people during change and uncertainty.
- Identify strategies and actions to support performance, engagement, and wellbeing of people during change.

The programme will start on 13 October. For further information on the programme visit [here](#), alternatively if you would like to have a conversation about the programme please contact Kirsty.lowe@emcouncils.gov.uk

EMC Leadership

Chair: Cllr Martin Hill OBE

Vice Chair: Cllr David Mellen

Vice Chair: Cllr Jonathan Morgan

Conservative Group: Cllr Roger Blaney

Labour Group: Cllr Rob Parker

Lib Dem Group: Cllr David Bill MBE

Independent Group: Cllr Jason Zadrozny

Executive Director: Stuart Young

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