

Plenary session speaker biographies

Thursday, 23rd February

12.45pm | Report launch: the value of district councils to local communities

Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader, South Cambridgeshire District Council

Cllr Bridget Smith is the Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council. Bridget has been the Leader of the Council for since 2018 and the District Councillor for the village of Gamlingay for the past 15 years. Bridget sits on the boards of both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership. Other than local politics, Bridget's passions are long distance walking, gardening, baking and spending time with her family.



Ben Shimshon, Co-founder and Managing Partner, BritainThinks

Ben is a leading insight practitioner conducting public opinion research and providing strategic counsel to clients across the public, private and third sectors. A specialist in policy development and communications insight, Ben counts Secretaries of State, Mayors, Council Leaders and Chief Executives amongst his clients. Ben leads BritainThinks an international insight and strategy consultancy which he founded in 2010 alongside two colleagues.



Professor Colin Copus

Colin Copus is an Emeritus Professor of local politics at the Department of Politics and Public Policy, De Montfort University and a Visiting Professor at the University of Ghent. His academic interests are central-local relationships and the constitutional status of local government, devolution, localism, local party politics, local political leadership and the changing role of the councillor.

Colin has worked closely with policy-makers and practitioners in central and local government. He was an academic advisor to the Political and the Constitutional Reform Committee and the Communities and Local Government Committee on its inquiry into the role of the councillor and he is currently the academic advisor to two All Party Parliamentary Groups. He is a member of the Council of Europe's group of experts on the Charter of Local Self Government.

Colin's most recent publications include: In Defence of Councillors, Manchester University Press, Local Government in England: Centralisation, Autonomy and Control, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and A Manifesto for Councillors, published by the Local Government Information Unit. Colin was the editor Local Government Studies 2001 to 2013

He has also served as a councillor on a London Borough council, a county and a district council and three parish councils.



Cllr Jamies Jamieson, LGA Chairman

Cllr James Jamieson was first elected to Central Bedfordshire Council in 2009 and served as a Chair of Scrutiny. He was elected as Leader following the 2011 elections and currently represents the Westoning Ward having previously represented Flitwick.

Cllr Jamieson has lived in Bedfordshire since the mid-eighties. He is a qualified engineer with a Masters degree from Sheffield University, and worked in industry and banking for over 20 years before setting up his own consultancy providing strategic advice to companies.

He was elected Leader of the LGA Conservative Group in July 2018 and elected as LGA Chairman in July 2019.



1.30pm | Ministerial keynote speech

Lee Rowley MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DLUHC

Lee Rowley was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 7 September 2022. He was previously Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Government Whip, Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury between 17 September 2021 and 6 July 2022.



He was elected the Conservative MP for North East Derbyshire on 8 June 2017.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Local Government and Building Safety) Portfolio:

- Local government policy, finance, improvement, engagement in England
- Building safety – remediation and regulation regimes
- Climate change, net zero and energy efficiency (building regulations)
- Elections policy and Elections Integrity Programme implementation
- Integration Strategy and communities
- Departmental implementation – stress testing delivery across all programmes and projects
- Planning casework

1.55pm | Panel discussion: districts at the heart of health and wellbeing

Ian Fytche, Chief Executive of North Kesteven District Council

Ian is Chief Executive of North Kesteven District Council in Lincolnshire. Ian began his career in construction, focused on project and contract management.

He spent 15 years working in sport, becoming director and chief operating officer of Sport England, where he led complex projects, including the redevelopment of Wembley Stadium and the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

Ian is Vice-Chair of the DCN Chief Executives Group and has facilitated delivery of DCN projects on health economics and pathways to net zero.



Jim McManus, ADPH President and Hertfordshire Director of Public Health

Jim McManus is ADPH President and Executive Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire and co-chair of the national collaborative of agencies designing a new Health Protection System for England. Jim is a registered Public Health Specialist, a Chartered Psychologist and a Chartered Scientist. During the pandemic he led local initiatives on COVID including fourteen health inequalities recovery projects and national served on multiple work from social care policy to being a member of SAGE. Before the pandemic he worked on systems approaches to reducing inequalities in health. In the aftermath of COVID Jim published a guide for public health teams, and a guide for faith and community agencies on working on trauma and resilience post Covid-19.



In 2022 he has been awarded the President's Medal of the Faculty of Public Health, a D.Sc (Hon) an Honorary Doctorate of Science from the University of Hertfordshire and Fellowship of the International Society of Science and Religion for his work on psychology, health and faith. Outside work Jim is a Trustee of St Joseph's Hospice, Hackney, a pro bono adviser to Positive Faith (a charity for people living with HIV) and a pro bono public health adviser to Prison Advice and Care Trust, which provides family services and resettlement support in two thirds of prisons in England and Wales. All of these roles enable him to support third sector agencies work on health inequalities.

Sarah Walter

Sarah Walter has a background in health policy, working at the Department of Health and NHS England before joining the NHS Confederation. Sarah has operated in a number of roles at the Confed, including Director of Corporate Services, regional lead for the South West and currently Director of the Confed's ICS Network.



Sarah is passionate about women's leadership and was previously Chair of the Confed's Health and Care Women's Leaders Network. She recently completed her Executive MBA at the University of Bath.

3.50

Survey Launch: Level Measures

Dale Wood, Regional Director and Relationship Partner South, Capita Local Public Service

Dale was born in Zambia and grew up in Zimbabwe. He is the Regional Director for the South of England and Wales for Capita's Local Public Services sector and has worked for in the sector for the last 18 years



Jonathan Werran, Chief Executive, Localis

Prior to running Localis - an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism - Jonathan worked in consultancy, communications and journalism. After five years as a reporter, commentator and features editor for The Municipal Journal (The MJ), in 2015 he became the first strategic communications officer for the District Councils' Network.



Prior to The MJ, he edited an online government property and public estate magazine and helped run communications and marketing for anti-poverty charity Elizabeth Finn Care. He began his career in online publishing and developed the groundbreaking 'Wired-Gov' service to repackage central government press releases.

3.50

Panel discussion: transforming services for a sustainable future

Geoff Tucker, Director, Norse Group

Geoff Tucker is a member of the senior team at Norse Group, the UK's leading LATCo. He joined the company in 2008, having worked in the private sector for outsourcing companies including Rentokil Initial, where he was Regional Director. As Norse's Group Business Development Director, he has been instrumental in the development of the Group's joint venture partnership model. The company's annual turnover is around £350 million, and it now has over twenty local authority partnerships operating across the UK. Geoff sits on the CBI's Public Sector Partners and East of England Regional Councils, and is a Non-Executive Director at a charitable trust.



Professor Tony Travers

Tony Travers is Associate Dean of the School of Public Policy at the London School of Economics. He is also a professor in the LSE's Government Department. His key research interests include public finance, local/ regional government and devolution.



In 2012-13 and again in 2016-17, he chaired the London Finance Commission and was a member of the City Growth Commission and also the Independent Commission

on Local Government Finance in Wales. He co-chaired the King's Commission on London. He is an advisor to the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee.

He is an Honorary Member of the Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation and also of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy.

He has published books and book chapters on local government, devolution, cities and London.

Jonathan Brook, Leader of South Lakeland District Council

Jonathan Brook has been the South Lakeland District Council councillor since 2006 and has had a number of roles, including leader of the council since 2021, he also holds the portfolio for Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation.

Since elections in 2022, Jonathan has also been councillor for Kendal South and leader of the new Westmorland and Furness Shadow Authority, which will take over provision of all local council services on 1 April this year.

In parallel with his elected roles, Jonathan has had a professional career in charity and business development, including 14 years as Chief Officer of Manna House, a Kendal based housing and homelessness charity. Prior to this Jonathan was a Project Manager with AXA Insurance.



4.25 | Ministerial Keynote Speech

The Rt Hon Victoria Prentis KC MP

Victoria Prentis has been the Member of Parliament for North Oxfordshire since May 2015. She was a member of the Justice Select Committee from 2015 until 2020 and acted as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Transport Ministers before she became Parliamentary Private Secretary to the then Leader of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom MP from 2017 until 2019. She then became Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Attorney General, the Rt Hon Geoffrey Cox QC MP in 2019. In February 2020 she was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and then Minister of State in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with responsibility for food, farming and fisheries. She became Minister of State in the Department for Work and Pensions with responsibility for work and welfare in September 2022 before becoming Attorney General for England and Wales in October 2022.

Victoria studied at the University of London and Downing College, Cambridge and completed her training as a barrister in 1995. For seventeen years she was a lawyer for the Treasury Solicitors' Department and ultimately headed the Government's Justice and Security team. This involved providing advice on military, prisons and national security matters and representing the Government in court. Victoria founded and chaired the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust's Benefactors' Board and has volunteered for many other charities.



Cllr Barry Wood, Leader of Cherwell District Council

Councillor Barry Wood BSc ACMA has been a District or County Councillor for more than 20 years and is the current Leader of Cherwell District Council. He is supported by North Oxfordshire Conservatives in respect of election expenses. He is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. He is the current interim Chair of the Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership. Barry is also a non executive Director of Oxlep and a member of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.



4.50 | Panel discussion: helping our residents in troubled times

Cllr Hannah Dalton, Majority Group Chair, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Hannah Dalton has served on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council since 2015 and is currently Chair of the Residents' Association Majority Group (Leader). She is also Deputy Leader of the Local Government Association Independent Group.

Hannah is passionate about a number of areas, and in particular is an advocate for women's rights and the challenges faced by cared for and ex-cared for young people.



Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation

Kate Henderson is Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation (NHF), the voice of housing associations in England.

Kate is passionate about tackling the housing crisis, inequality and climate change. She is a member of several government panels including the Net Zero Buildings Council, Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel, and the Social Housing Quality Expert Challenge Panel.

Kate became a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in 2021. Prior to joining the NHF in 2018, Kate was Chief Executive of the Town and Country Planning Association.



Helen Barnard, Director of Research and Policy at Pro Bono Economics and Associate Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)

Helen is a leading national expert on poverty, inequality and social policy. Her extensive body of written work and regular media contributions have covered poverty, destitution, labour markets, housing and social security. She is author of *Want, A New Beveridge Report* and on the Board of Trustees for the National Centre for Social Research.



Jamie Sutterby, Director of People & Communities for South Norfolk & Broadland Councils

Jamie is a highly accomplished Strategic Director, developing and leading teams, including Waste Services, Leisure, Housing and Community teams. Jamie has a 15-year career in Local Government working across and building strong partnerships with Health and other districts, working collaboratively together to deliver the right outcomes closest to the communities in which we serve.



8.00

Conference After-Dinner Speaker

Professor Sir Jonathan Van-Tam

Jonathan Van-Tam is a public health specialist with a clinical background in emergency medicine, anaesthesia, and infectious diseases. He is an expert on respiratory viruses and pandemics and is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Medicine, and Health Sciences, at the University of Nottingham. His career has also taken him to Public Health England, the World Health Organization, and the pharmaceutical and vaccine industries.

Jonathan was seconded to the Department of Health and Social Care as Deputy Chief Medical Officer. He is well-known for his leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly his straight, no-nonsense, communication style from the podium at number ten Downing Street, and for the acquisition and rollout of vaccines and antiviral drugs in the UK.



After stepping down as Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England he returned to the University of Nottingham as its Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Medicine & Health Sciences.

Jonathan received a knighthood from Her Majesty the Queen in her New Year's Honours List, for services to public health. He has also been awarded the Royal Society's Attenborough Award and Lecture for outstanding public engagement in science.

Friday, 24th February

9.40

Keynote Speech

Daisy Cooper MP

Daisy Cooper is Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats, and the party's spokesperson for Health and Social Care in the House of Commons. Elected in December 2019, Daisy is the first Liberal Democrat MP for St Albans in Hertfordshire. As a former district councillor, and Vice-President of the LGA, Daisy believes in the fundamental importance of local government in delivering local services, that are sensitive to the communities they serve.



In Parliament, Daisy championed the role of councils in delivering essential services during the Covid pandemic, and their ability to do so quickly and efficiently. Daisy also campaigns for reform of the developer-led, top-down planning framework. She uses every opportunity to push the government to properly resource our depleted local planning departments, and has exposed eye-watering subsidies given by council tax payers, as a result of outdated planning fee schedules

10.05

Panel discussion: driving growth through place-based partnerships

Jackie Sadek, Director, Urban Strategy

Jackie Sadek has over 35 years' experience in property, specializing in public-private sector partnerships. A former Specialist Adviser to Government on urban regeneration, Jackie now runs Urban Strategy, an urban regeneration consultancy. She was part of the Grimsey Review team on the future of the high street and an honorary Fellow of the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors. She is a Member of the Property Week Hall of Fame and co-author of "Broken Homes".



Stephen Teagle, Chief Executive, Countryside Partnerships

Stephen Teagle is Chief Executive of Countryside Partnerships, part of the Vistry Group, the largest builder of affordable housing in England and a leading regeneration specialist. Working with Registered Providers, PRS providers and Local Authorities, Countryside Partnerships is in the vanguard of playing its part to increase the supply of housing and help build sustainable communities.



Stephen is a chartered surveyor with over 30 years' experience in the regeneration and affordable housing sectors. He has been involved in a wide range of regeneration forums and Trusts, focused on neighbourhood renewal and new supply.

A respected housing commentator, Stephen has been Chair of The Housing Forum since April 2020. He is a passionate advocate of collaboration across the sector to improve the supply and quality of new homes.

Adam Hawksbee Deputy Director, UK Onward

Adam Hawksbee is the Deputy Director at Onward. He was previously Head of Policy at the West Midlands Combined Authority, working with Mayor Andy Street to shape and deliver programmes on housing, transport, skills, and economic development. Adam is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, where he was a Kennedy Fellow, and has worked with US Mayors as a Research Fellow at the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative and during a period at the New York City Mayor's Office of Operations. He lives in the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham.



Michelle Sacks, Deputy Chief Executive (Growth), South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

Michelle is Deputy Chief Executive (Growth) for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) between Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council. Michelle has responsibility for growth which includes place, infrastructure, economic growth, skills and inward investment.



Developing key relationships with businesses, private and public sector partners - including and national and international - is an integral part of her role, ensuring that opportunities within the SELCP geography are shared widely and the potential for collaboration to deliver growth is collectively understood. This approach delivers outcomes for the benefit of all parts of the community.

Michelle is also the lead chief officer on the Town Deal and Levelling Up Funds and wider funding streams across the three authorities.

11.50

Panel discussion: delivering net zero and green growth

Adele Gritten, Chief Executive, Local Partnerships

Adele joined Local Partnerships as chief executive in November 2022, having spent the previous two and a half years as Head of Economic Development and Commercial Investments at South Cambridgeshire District Council. Highlights in that role included oversight of £43M of COVID-19 grant funding and a five year investment strategy including the Council's Investment Partnerships. Adele also oversaw Enterprise Zone development, High Street and Market Town development, Growth Coaching and Business Support for regional businesses.



An experienced Board level executive, Adele is currently serving a four year term as a non-executive director of S4C, the Welsh language Public Service Broadcaster. She was appointed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport into the role in January 2021.

For over 20 years Adele has worked in senior management roles for a range of research and strategy consultancies including YouGov, where she oversaw the commercial consulting arm of the business. Adele has also served as European managing director for research firm Lieberman Research Worldwide, and as UK managing director of Future Thinking, now a Savanta owned company.

Adele holds an MA in Social and Political Science from the University of Cambridge. She is also a fluent Welsh speaker.

Christopher Hammond, Membership and Insights Director, UK100

Christopher Hammond is the Membership and Insights Director for UK100. Previously, Christopher served as the elected Leader of Southampton City Council from 2018-2021. During his tenure as a councillor (2013-2022), he brokered an agreement that led to the country's first commercial Shore Power facility, devised a Green City Charter subsequently signed by 75 of the major city



organisations and at the time, led the most extensive insourcing programme in the country. In addition, he prioritised investing in young people, tackling fuel poverty and food insecurity. In 2020, he was shortlisted for 'Leader of the Year' in the LGIU Councillor Awards.

Born and raised in Dagenham in East London, Christopher was the first of his family to graduate from university. Afterwards, he worked as a race equality advocate and governance and risk manager for Nationwide Building Society. In 2018 he established an award-winning restaurant in Southampton. Christopher holds a degree from Bournemouth University, which named him its 2019 Alumni of the Year.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader, Oxford City Council

Susan first stood for election to Oxfordshire County Council when she was 23. The following year she was elected a city councillor for Wood Farm Ward and represented that area for 12 years until she stood down.

Susan came back onto the council and the City Executive Board in 2015 where she held the portfolio for Financial Inclusion and Customer Services. She was elected Deputy Leader in 2017 and then Leader in 2018. As Leader of Oxford City Council, Susan also leads on Economic Development and partnership working.

Susan sits on a local charity, St Mary Magdalen Parish Charities, is a Director of Oxford Local Economic Partnership, Chair of Fast Growth Cities and a member of the Oxfordshire Growth Board.



Johnny Denis, Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities, Lewes District Council

Johnny Denis, Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities at Lewes District Council, is an advocate of Community Wealth building and sees building resilient local supply chains as an intrinsic part of the sustainability gain of retrofit. Johnny is a long-time supporter of community and social enterprise development.



12.30

Keynote speakers: Leading through adversity

Cllr Peter Fleming, Leader, Sevenoaks District Council

Peter is leader of multi award winning Sevenoaks District Council, the first council to become self-sufficient from direct government funding, running a balanced 10 year rolling budget, in-house services and using investment property to support services to, and the priorities of, its residents.

He has served in a number of roles at the Local Government Association including Chair of the Improvement & Innovation Board and Deputy Chairman. He is also a national spokesperson for the Association. Peter also sits on the Executive of the District Councils' Network and is currently the Lead member for Finance & Investment.



Barry Quirk

One of the most successful chief executives in UK local government, Barry has experience of working for six Councils in London, and of being (in the 1980s) an elected councillor in a seventh. After 24 years as CEx at Lewisham, where he led the Council's innovations in service, organisation and democratic practice, he joined the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, in the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017. He left RBKC at the end of October 2022, after 45 years in local government.



Barry also has experience of working across Whitehall. From being a NED on the board of HMRC for six years; as an independent member of two capability reviews of HM Treasury; and, for five years, as DLUHC's efficiency champion for English local government. His 2007 report for DLUHC on the benefits of community asset transfer still remains relevant.

With a PhD in political and social geography, Barry writes regularly on public policy and management issues. His second book, Re-imagining Government, was published to critical academic acclaim, as was his chapter on public ethics in the The Palgrave Handbook of the Public Servant (2021). He is currently writing on the ethics of advice giving and decision making in government and the public sector.

Jackie Weaver, Chief Officer, Cheshire Association of Local Councils

Jackie has been involved in the Local Council Sector for over 25 years, serving as a councillor, a clerk, and (until the present day) as Chief Officer for the Cheshire Association of Local Councils- providing support, information, guidance and training to the Town and Parish Councils of Cheshire.



Jackie holds the Certificate of Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and has recently completed a BSc in Counselling, now a qualified Mediator.

Since a video of a local council meeting Jackie facilitated went viral she's enjoyed many public engagements both in the media and on TV, now having a well-received podcast (@jackieweaverpod) and has written a little book of common sense – (You do have the authority here).

Through the media she encourages greater awareness and participation in local democracy, and in particular promoting greater diversity in the sector.

Martin Smith, Former Commandant General of the Royal Marines

Martin is now Managing Director, Cyber Prism Limited. As a former Commandant General of the Royal Marines, Martin commanded the UK's Amphibious Force and led the UK's maritime counter terrorism force. Martin has 33 years' experience in maritime security and military information superiority. He has been the MD of CyberPrism since December 2019, specialising in software and client services for the protection of operational technology.

