

Leaders Report – 26th July 2018

1. **Cabinet changes**

Following the announcement of the Mid Suffolk Annual Monitoring Report, and due to personal reasons, Cllr. David Whybrow has announced his resignation as Cabinet Member for Planning. With effect from Monday 16th July, I have appointed Cllr. Glen Horn to that position, and Cllr Suzi Morley will become the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Organisational Delivery. Cllr. Morley's lead member role of Customer Access will be subsumed into her new cabinet role, and the post will be removed from the Administration's establishment.

I would like to place on record my thanks for the work Cllr Whybrow has done in his portfolio area.

2. **East of England LGA AGM – 4th July 2018**

The Leader of Essex County Council, Councillor David Finch, was elected as the new Chairman of the. Councillor Finch will be supported by the Leader of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Councillor Mandy Perkins, who was also elected as the Vice-Chairman at the meeting.

3. **LGA Conference -3rd to 5th July 2018.**

Cllr. Eburne and I attended this year's conference which was held in Birmingham. Having attended a number of sessions, it is clear that the governments domestic priority is housing, although there was a strong emphasis on communities and place shaping. There seems to be recognition of local government and their role in dealing with the issues over the last few years, but it was made painfully clear there is no extra money.

At the EELGA session, Lord Adonis spoke about the need for the Eastern region to get involved with extending the Oxford/Cambridge/Milton Keys corridor across the region to the eastern coast. Surprisingly he was unaware of the Transport East Forum (a forum including local councils, Highways England, Network Rail and Local Enterprise Partnerships as well as other strategic partners such as ports, airports, rail and bus operators from across the East of England).

The Secretary of State's speech to the Assembly was, it has to be said, short on policy announcements, but I attach a summary as appendix 1 to this report.

Cllr Nick Gowrley
Leader MSDC

Appendix 1- Notes from James Brokenshire's speech to LGA Conference

Funding:

- Plans to publish a prospectus for a further round of Business Rates retention pilots for 2019-2020, to help best understand how to shift to greater retention from 2020-21. This will be published alongside consultation on the approach to next year's annual settlement.
- The Social Care Green Paper will be published in the Autumn.

Modernising Services:

- Highlighted launch of the Digital Declaration (4 July) which is a joint Government Digital Service/MHCLG initiative describing what good digital transformation looks like and setting out five principles that organisations can adopt to achieve this. The aim is to help central and local government learn from best practice and "...build the public services of tomorrow."
- Local government reorganisation will be supported if it has local support and a credible geography. It will not be forced on areas if it is not wanted or needed.

Onward Devolution:

- Will publish a Civil Society Strategy later this summer, which will set out the government's vision for how it can work with groups 'on the ground', taking advantage of the opportunity of the digital age to harness local knowledge to redesign services, and reflecting the fact that people want more of a say as to what happens in their communities.
- Wherever possible such 'onward devolution' should be integral to devolution deals, allowing local communities to decide what outcomes matter most and finding local solutions.
- Such an "...ultra-localist..." agenda will help create stronger communities and renew democracy, giving people a real sense of ownership of the places where they live.

Housing:

- Highlighted that the government has responded to the call from local authorities for extra financial flexibility and invited them to bid for £1bn of additional borrowing.
- Changes are being made to how the Affordable Homes Programme works, with Homes England now entering into longer-term strategic partnerships with housing associations.
- The first wave of these deals was announced on 3 July and a second is planned for later this summer.
- The Social Housing Green Paper will be published shortly.

Brexit and Local Growth

- Will set up a delivery board with local government that will support implementation of changes linked to Brexit within the sector.
- It is essential that focus on local growth and productivity is renewed, both via devolution deals and other opportunities such as housing deals, local industrial strategies, and the LEP Review.

Communities

- Everything the government is doing comes down to building strong, vibrant and well-integrated communities, with "...local government leading the way."
- Consultation on the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* closed on 5 June 2018 and the government is now considering the responses received.
- The government plans to host a Communities Conference in September, to showcase the impact communities can have and "...inspire policymakers..."