

EMC POLICY BRIEF

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

Top items this week

24 NOVEMBER 2017



Autumn Budget 2017



Local Government Finance for Councillors



EMC Events for Councillors and Officers

Autumn Budget 2017

With the mounting financial pressure on local authorities, and low levels of infrastructure funding, the region was looking to the Autumn 2017 Budget for (just a little) relief. However, with the exception of announcements on business rates retention pilots, the Chancellor made no announcements on business rates retention reform or the Fair Funding Review, adult social care and support and the budget pressures facing children's services. Similarly, there was little in the way of infrastructure or other significant funding announcements for the region.

The full details of the 2017 Autumn Budget are available [here](#). The central point is that there is not much money to go around. That much is clear - but for those wanting a greater share of the pot (little as it may be) there's disappointment. The Midlands Connect infrastructure investment is positive, as is the upgrade of the Network Rail test-track in Melton Mowbray and spending on flood defences, and the proposed manufacturing zone pilot in the region is 'interesting'. But no big game changers and little delivery against headline infrastructure priorities. Here's the detail:

Midlands Connect receives additional £6million to drive road and rail improvements

£4million to continue the work of the Midlands Motorway Hub project, identifying ways in which the network can operate more efficiently in the short term and proposing longer term solutions to existing capacity constraints. This will bring improved resilience and reliability to the network through developing options for new infrastructure and cutting edge technology.

£2million for the Midlands Rail Hub, a central plank of the strategy to improve connectivity between key centres across the Midlands to deliver economic growth. Relieving a capacity constraint between Coventry and Leamington will improve connectivity across the region between the Thames-Valley area and the East Midlands. Full details [here](#).

Midlands Connect, in collaboration with central government, brings together local authorities and local enterprise partnerships from across the Midlands.

This week's Policy Brief highlights some other areas of the Autumn Budget 2017;

- Increase in the national living wage from April to £7.83.
- At Spring Budget 2017 the Government announced £5 million for projects to celebrate the centenary of voting rights being extended to women for the first time in 1918. In the Budget the Chancellor announced that £1.2 million of this will go to fund activities in seven cities and towns with strong links to the campaign for women's suffrage – Bolton, Bristol, Leeds, **Leicester**, London, Manchester, and **Nottingham**.
- The launch of the Homelessness Reduction Taskforce. Plus £20 million of funding for schemes to support people at risk of homelessness to access and sustain tenancies in the private rented sector.
- A £1.7 billion fund from the National Productivity Investment Fund to support intra-city transport, will target projects which drive productivity by improving connectivity, reducing congestion and utilising new mobility services and technology. Half will be allocated via competition for transport projects in cities.
- The Government is launching a new £190 million Challenge Fund that local areas around the country will bid for to encourage faster rollout of full-fibre networks by industry.
- The Government is investing an additional £45 million in 2017-18 to tackle around 900,000 potholes across England.
- To support the role culture can play in regeneration and local growth, the government will provide £2 million funding to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for place-based cultural development.

European Capital of Culture - UK turn cancelled

The European Commission has cancelled the UK's turn to host the European Capital of Culture after Brexit, disappointing the bidding cities. Five places have already bid to hold the title in 2023 - Dundee, **Nottingham**, Leeds, Milton Keynes and Belfast/Derry. But the commission has said the UK will no longer be eligible to have a host city after it leaves the EU in 2019. A statement from the Nottingham bid team said they hoped the situation "can be resolved positively.

Despite previous reassurances that Britain's vote to leave the EU would not affect it hosting the 2023 contest, the European Commission has now told stated, "Given that the UK will have left the EU by 29 March 2019, and therefore be unable to host the European Capital of Culture in 2023, we believe it makes common sense to discontinue the selection process now." The Nottingham bid was launched in August.

It is more important than ever that **all councillors** understand how the local government finance system works. There is a high degree of uncertainty around council budgets in the context of the decision to leave the EU; implications of business rates retention and compounded by the recent General Election result that has led to a hung Parliament.

In any case whatever the factors (large and small) that will influence the funding of local government over the next few years, all elected members have a role to play in the financial affairs of the council: executive councillors have to develop and implement the budget; councillors on scrutiny committees should be reviewing the budget process and financial planning and every councillor needs to involve their residents in the political choices that have to be made about budgets and council tax. If you are going to make a difference as a councillor it is crucial that you understand finance and are confident about your role.

Seminar content - This seminar gives a very good grounding in how local government finance works in practice and sets the 'basics as part of the bigger picture of current developments and longer term trends – the approach of the new Chancellor, Philip Hammond, funding plans for the next five years and the implications of 'Devolution' and 'Brexit'.

The seminar will also cover the emerging impact of major changes to local government finance: including the journey towards the 100% localisation of Business Rates, the end of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and the expectation of councils generating local economic growth to help fund services. The impact on council budgets of welfare reform changes; the Localism Act and any fresh government initiatives will also be assessed. **For more information on this event and to book a place visit [here](#).**

East Midlands Infrastructure Summit - On Monday 27 November EMC in partnership with the East Midlands Chamber will host the East Midlands Infrastructure Summit at Leicester City Hall. Bringing together leading businesses and politicians, this event will offer attendees the opportunity to help shape the development of strategic transport projects and investment, to inform our work with Government in securing this investment and to learn more about the potential impact of new projects, including plans for HS2 in the region. Information on the Summit will be included in next weeks Policy Brief.

EMC Boards Activity

In the coming weeks a number of EMCs Board meetings will be taking place;

- **East Midlands Migration Board** - 30 November 2017
- **Transport for the East Midlands** - 1 December 2017
- **HS2 Strategic Board** - 1 December 2017
- **EMC Executive Board** - 8 December 2017

EMC Councillor Events

Negotiation Skills for Councillors, 7 Feb 2017 - EMC is offering a half day workshop for Councillors on Negotiation Skills. This half-day module will help delegates to understand what negotiation is, and is not, in the business world. It will give them practical skills to enable them to prepare for a negotiation scenario, weighing up variables and anticipating challenges along the way. More information on the workshop is available from [here](#).

Welfare Reform and Housing

Details of the £1.5 billion package of support for Universal Credit - The measures announced include [details [here](#)]:

- local authorities being able to recoup over 80% of the money they spend on temporary accommodation directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) rather than from the claimant, preventing losses of more than £70 million over 2018/19
- extended partnership working with Citizen's Advice, to provide more face to face support to Universal Credit claimants

This follows the announcements in the Autumn Budget, including:

- abolishing the 7 waiting day period to reduce the wait for payment from 6 weeks to 5 from February 2018
- extending the repayment of advances from 6 to 12 months, and allowing people to receive 100% of their payment upfront from January 2018 (people who make a claim in December can get a 50% advance, and then in January can ask for a top up to 100%)
- making it possible for people to apply for advances online from spring 2018, making it even easier for a claimant to access an advance if they need it
- paying an additional 2 weeks' of housing costs after the end of someone's Housing Benefit claim and into their Universal Credit claim from April 2018
- making it easier for claimants to continue having their housing costs paid directly to landlords once they are on Universal Credit

Infrastructure, Planning & Housing

Nottingham is transport exemplar, says Transport Secretary - Transport Secretary Chris Grayling visited Nottingham this week to see how the city has developed an integrated transport system. He pointed to Nottingham as an 'exemplar' for integrated transport [more details [here](#)].

Live tables on social housing sales The tables below provide statistics on the sales of social housing stock – whether owned by local authorities or private registered providers. The most common of these sales are by the Right to Buy (and preserved Right to Buy) scheme and there are separate tables for sales under that scheme [details [here](#)].

Discretionary Housing Payments guidance manual - This guidance is for local authorities in England and Wales who are responsible for administering Discretionary Housing Payments. For more visit [here](#).

Local Government News and wider



LGA Publication, Councillor Handbook: Taxi and PHV Licensing - This 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. To access this workbook visit [here](#).

LGA Publication, Councillor workbook: scrutiny of finance - This workbook will provide you with an understanding of the principles and practicalities of scrutinising the financial affairs of your council. To access this workbook visit [here](#).

Chancellor to unlock hidden value of government data - The Chancellor has announced a new Geospatial Commission to maximise the value of all UK government data linked to location, and to create jobs and growth in a modern economy. Location-aware technologies are revolutionising the economy. From navigating public transport to tracking supply chains and planning efficient delivery routes, the digital services built on GPS and the current mapping data have quietly become everyday parts of daily life and commerce [details [here](#)].

Smith Square debate on 5 December: Brexit and local government - The LGA is holding a debate on 5 December to discuss which repatriated powers should be devolved to local government; how the £5.3 billion investment that was supposed to be received from the EU until 2020 will be replaced; and the impact on the workforce and skills [details [here](#)].

LGA Publication, Councillor workbook: Stress management and personal resilience - This workbook is aimed at helping councillors to understand the signs of stress and to develop strategies to deal with it, as well as building up their own personal resilience in the role. To access the workbook visit [here](#).

Health & Social Care



Government to set out proposals to reform care and support - The First Secretary of State and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Damian Green, has announced that the government will publish a green paper on care and support for older people by summer 2018. The paper will set out plans for how government proposes to improve care and support for older people and tackle the challenge of an ageing population [details [here](#)].

Public Health England's Chief Executive Duncan Selbie's Friday message - 24 November 2017 edition available [here](#).

EMC Events

Coaching Tools Boot Camp, 7 December 2017 - This workshop will focus on tools used within coaching sessions. Facilitated by experienced executive coach Cathy Lasher the workshop will help to develop coaches knowledge and skills when using coaching tools, enabling coaches to have access to a variety of different tools and understand when they are most effective. For more information visit [here](#).

Negotiation Skills for Officers, 07 Feb 2018 - East Midlands Councils is offering a half day workshop for Officers on Negotiation Skills on 7 February 2018, Pera Business Park, Melton Mowbray. For more information on this workshop visit [here](#).

EMC Leadership

Chair: Cllr Martin Hill OBE
Vice Chair: Cllr Jon Collins
Vice Chair: Cllr Chris Millar
Conservative Group: Cllr Roger Blaney
Labour Group: Cllr Anne Western
Lib Dem Group: Cllr David Bill MBE
Independent Group: Mayor Kate Allsop

Executive Director: Stuart Young

East Midlands Councils

First Floor Offices, South Annexe
Pera Business Park
Nottingham Road
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire
LE13 0PB



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