

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

Top items this week

16 MARCH 2018



Housing Announcements



Northamptonshire County Council best value inspection



Midlands Engine Event



EMC Events for Councillors and Officers



Northamptonshire County Council best value inspection

Report of the findings of the best value inspection into Northamptonshire County Council was published on Thursday 15 March. The full report is available from [here](#).

The report sets out detailed findings of the inspection including the inspector's conclusions, the evidence and methodology used, and proposals for the future. The report details

"The Inspection team believe that a new start is required for the residents of Northamptonshire which can deliver confidence and quality in the full range of Local Government services. This can best be achieved by the creation of two new Unitary Councils, one covering the area of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire and the other encompassing Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough. These should be established following elections to be held in May 2020 and be in operation commencing at their first annual meeting.

In the meantime the Secretary of State should give serious consideration to whether Commissioners should take over the running of all services save planning currently provided by Northamptonshire County Council and on what basis". The report also confirms that it is understood that the Boroughs and Districts in Northamptonshire have commissioned Deloitte's to report on prospects for unitary models and that report is imminent.

Northamptonshire County Council response to inspection report

Cllr Heather Smith has announced she has resigned as council leader with immediate effect. The process to find a new leader will now take place.

Northamptonshire County Council has accepted the findings of the Best Value Inspection report and it will now be looking to respond to the Secretary of State within the coming days. The council has welcomed the recommendation within the report to move to unitary governance in the county and is now committed to working alongside partners to achieve this in the timescale outlined. To read the response visit [here](#).



EMC News

East Midlands Scrutiny Network - On 16 March the East Midlands Scrutiny network met at Erewash Borough Council. The meeting included a presentation from Cllr James Dawson, Erewash Borough Council and the Local Government Association lead for Water Safety on water safety/drowning prevention and local councils' responsibilities. The presentation included information on the Nottinghamshire Water Safety Partnership and their achievements since September 2016.

LGA Water safety toolkit - The LGA has produced a water safety toolkit for councils, to ensure both locals and visitors enjoy the natural environment safely whether on the coast or inland. The toolkit is available from [here](#).

For more information on the Scrutiny Network contact kirsty.lowe@emcouncils.gov.uk

Invitation to attend Asylum, Refugee Resettlement and Modern Slavery Summit, 20 March 2018 - There are a small number of places left at this event. The programme is available from [here](#), if you would like to book one of the last few fully subsidised places visit [here](#).

EMC Boards Activity

East Midlands Regional Employers Board - The next board meeting will take place on 17 April.

EMC Councillor Events

The Role of the Civic Head and Team, 23 May 2018 - EMC is running an event on 23 May 2018 on the Role of the Civic Head and Team. For more information visit [here](#).

Chairing and Facilitation Skills for Councillors, 26 June 2018 - EMC is running a half day Chairing and Facilitation Skills event for Councillors. The training is to be delivered by Nelson Training, an award winning drama based training company. For more information visit [here](#).

Infrastructure, Planning & Housing



Housing Minister announces homes boost for rural families - Rural communities will be given more options to convert agricultural buildings into family homes to better meet local housing needs through planning rule changes, announced Housing Minister Dominic Raab. Details are available from [here](#).

More support to boost house building momentum - Further steps that will support the government's comprehensive plans to build homes were announced this week by the Chancellor. £60 million investment has also been announced to boost the Housing Growth Partnership fund that supports small and medium sized housebuilders enabling them to invest in housing projects and develop their businesses.

Independent review into the gap between planning permissions granted and homes completed - Sir Oliver Letwin has also set out [next steps of his independent review](#) into the gap between planning permissions granted and homes completed.

Early review findings to tackle barriers to building - Early findings of the independent review to understand why hundreds of thousands of homes haven't been built, despite having planning permission has been published in a [letter to the Chancellor and Sajid Javid](#).

Originally announced at the Autumn Budget, the review, led by Sir Oliver Letwin, is looking to explain the gap between the number of planning permissions being granted against those built in areas of high demand.

The first phase, which aimed to identify the main causes of the gap by reviewing large housing sites where planning permission has already been granted, focused on information-gathering sessions with local authorities, developers and non-government organisations and visits to large sites.

Sir Oliver's review has found that the absorption rate – the rate at which newly constructed homes can be sold into the local market – appears to be a fundamental driver of the rate at which houses are built.

In advance of publishing a Draft Analysis in June, Sir Oliver will investigate whether increasing the variety of homes built increases the rate at which homes can be sold. The final report will make recommendations on practical steps to increase the speed of build is expected at Autumn Budget this year.

Further information available from [here](#).

Transport Secretary welcomes next step in £1.7 billion fund to transform local journeys - Up to 10 English city regions will then be selected to work with the Department for Transport to co-develop a strong package of proposals. These will focus on improving public and sustainable transport links to centres of employment and driving up productivity.

The announcement is the next step in the £1.7 billion Transforming Cities Fund, [launched as part of the Industrial Strategy at the Autumn Budget 2017](#) to address weaknesses in city transport systems in order to increase access to jobs and prosperity. This investment is part of the government's £31 billion [National Productivity Investment Fund](#) aimed at improving productivity, which is key to raising living standards.

The fund will support new local transport links, particularly for those struggling to travel between city centres and suburban areas. Proposals will be accepted from local transport authorities outside London who represent a city region with a workday population of around 200,000 or more people. Further details available from [here](#).

Regional Monitor March 2018, - The West Midlands Economic Forum have published their 'Latest Global Trends, Regional PMI, Output Data, Trade Conditions & Brexit Update' this week. This report highlights;

- East Midlands is the fastest growing region for second month running, while West Midlands is the third fastest
- The Midlands reported the fastest increase in employment in the UK in February

To access the report visit [here](#).

Midlands Engine



Mental Health, Productivity and the Midlands Engine - Poor mental health and well-being is increasingly understood as a significant barrier to employment, growth and productivity, with business and council leaders clear on the cost to the local economy.

While tackling issues through closer health and care integration is a priority for many, the financial challenges facing the mental health community - often seen as highly innovative in how it works within and across its local populations - have never been greater.

This free event, hosted by the Midlands Engine, Midlands Innovation, the NHS Confederation and the Mental Health Network, brings together senior representatives from the region's business, university, local government and health and care sectors to better understand how we can collectively engage in this important agenda and help realise the Midlands Engine's ambitions to better align mental health with innovation. To attend, please register [here](#).

Employers' Information



LGA Publication, 'Great people for growing places: a consultation on the strategy for the local government workforce' - This document sets out the LGA's draft vision and priorities for the workforce that they suggest the sector will be engaging with over the next five to ten years and provide some ideas on how to achieve that vision. The LGA are keen to receive thoughts on those priorities. The document is available from [here](#), the consultation [here](#).

CEEP UK News Alert - 15 March 2018 - In this issue [available [here](#)]:

- Commission Action Plan on Sustainable Finance
- Best practices collection – Integration of TCNs in the Labour market
- Information request on energy infrastructure ownership
- CEEP SGI Task Force: Meeting documents for next meeting on 23 March
- CEEP Water Task Force: Final draft CEEP Feedback to Commission DWD Proposal and next steps

Local Government News



LGA Publication, Supporting councils to improve revenue collection with behavioural insights - Behavioural insights is based on the idea that interventions aimed at encouraging people to make better choices for themselves and society will be more successful if they are based on an improved understanding of how people actually behave.

One of the earliest proven examples of a council intervention was to increase revenue collection from residents through their council tax. Since then, many councils have improved financial outcomes by changing the way they write their council tax letters. In this publication, the LGA and the Behavioural Insights Team have gathered the learning from such projects to help councils use behavioural insights to enhance the way they collect revenue and improve outcomes at little cost. To access the report visit [here](#).

Community



New government action to create a stronger, more integrated Britain - Communities Secretary Sajid Javid set out a long-term plan of action to tackle the root causes of poor integration and create a stronger, more united Britain this week.

The [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#), to which £50 million will be committed over the next 2 years, seeks views on the government's bold proposals to boost English language skills, increase opportunities for more women to enter the workplace, and promote British values and meaningful discussion between young people. For more information visit [here](#). Consultation [here](#).

Community-based English language programme: a randomised controlled trial - In April 2015, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ran a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of its community-based English language programme on language proficiency and social integration outcomes. The RCT was conducted in 5 local authority areas. A process evaluation was also commissioned and ran alongside the RCT, to assess how robustly the RCT was implemented [details [here](#)]

Health & Social Care

Public Health England Chief Executive Duncan Selbie's Friday message - 16 March 2018 message is available [here](#).

EMC Events

Trading and Marketing Public Services, 16 May 2018 - EMC is holding a full day workshop on Trading and Marketing Public Services. This module introduces managers to the role of trading and entrepreneurship in a public service environment and some fundamental principles of marketing. For more information visit [here](#).

LEAN Practitioner Training, starting on 19 Sep 2018 - LEAN Practitioner Training is a two-day module to develop your understanding of how using a variety of LEAN thinking and improvement tools can achieve improved services and outcomes. For more information 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

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