

# **The Future Town Hall**

How will local government be different 30 years from now? A collection of ideas to mark the 30th anniversary of LGiU

**LGiU is a think tank and local authority membership organisation. Our mission is to strengthen local democracy to put citizens in control of their own lives, communities and local services. We work with local councils and other public services providers, along with a wider network of public, private and third sector organisations.**

**LGiU**

the local democracy think tank

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**“Thinking afresh,  
engaging people in  
decisions in their own  
neighbourhood and  
areas of interest and  
joining together in cross-  
boundary initiatives, can  
make a difference.”**

**Rt Hon David Blunkett, MP**

# Foreword by Cllr Dave Wilcox

## Chair of LGiU

I like to think that it's typical of LGiU, to celebrate its thirtieth birthday looking forwards rather than backwards. Thirty years ago the Pound coin replaced the Pound note. The chance of it still being with us 30 years ahead is remote. I presume we'll still be carrying some sort of money around on our person, but whether it will be a national currency, international plasti-tender or the Bristol Pound is anyone's guess.

I'd like to give special thanks to all those who've contributed to LGiU's development in the last thirty years. You've been worth your weight in gold. And a particular "thank you" to those who've submitted their three hundred words to this publication. Most futures work is based on best and worst case scenarios. In 300 words you're hardly able to describe the future, never mind the nuances.

None of us know the specific skills requirements of the future. The successful are likely to be the flexible and imaginative. Managing people will almost certainly remain a priceless quality, as will leadership and the capacity to motivate. No matter the communication medium, the ability to be crisp, precise and clear will remain paramount.

The localities will have more power, only if they seize it. The world will be safer only if we are able to maturely cooperate and value compromise as a virtue rather than a weakness. Humankind has the intellectual ability to make the globe a better place. But our capacity to self-destruct should not be underestimated.

I'm already looking forward to LGiU's 60th birthday party. I might travel down on HS2 and pay the fare in Derbyshire Dosh. Whether I'll still be eligible for my old git's discount fare remains a matter of conjecture.

That's the introduction, in precisely 300 words. Happy birthday LGiU!

# Caroline Abrahams

## Charity Director, Age UK

Increasing longevity means that over the next thirty years the proportion of the population aged over 65 is set to rise from under a quarter to approaching a third. The biggest increase will be among the over 85s whose numbers are expected to more than treble over this period.

Because of the scale of these demographic trends, ensuring the health and wellbeing of the older population is likely to be an even greater concern for councils in 2043 than now. In addition, these trends will have differential impacts locally, so regardless of how successfully central government grips the risks and opportunities of ageing, councils are sure to have a key role in developing and implementing our response.

Technology is likely to be a more prominent feature of how services work in 2043 than it is now but, in the end, for most older people face to face relationships will still matter much more.

Rather than 'one man bands' I think and hope that councils will be 'conductors of orchestras': demonstrating leadership by bringing diverse people and organisations together, brokering solutions with individuals, families and communities and making the most of all the available local assets, of which older people's contributions comprise a substantial part.

You might say this is what the best councils do already and you'd be right, but I hope that by 2043 every council will be doing it everywhere.

Why no mention of social care in this vision? Because by 2043 I trust that we will have resolved the current crisis and created new ways of working that place social care where it should always be: central to our efforts to support the health and wellbeing of older and disabled people, and resourced accordingly.

# Mike Adamson

## Managing Director of Operations, British Red Cross

Councils are now part of community resilience hubs. The hubs have evolved through incarnations of the earlier Health and Wellbeing Boards, but now manage a single community budget.

Having recognised the learning from Scotland's Change Fund, English councils sought to avoid the same mistake of undervaluing the role of the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector is an equal and valued partner in the hubs.

Social media has continued to fuel citizens' will and expectation to be actively involved in local scrutiny and decision-making. The hubs are increasingly open to citizens and in some areas are citizen-led. Citizens have opportunities to vote on the hubs' collective goals, as well as the products and services they'd like to see available for them to buy with their individual citizen budgets. Private and state funds are easily integrated and managed now that mobile payments are the norm.

Councils have had to innovate quickly to keep up with the mobile technology advancements seen in countries like Kenya. Self-care and self-management of long-term conditions are widespread thanks to the ease of things like distance learning, medication monitoring and telehealth.

While councils acknowledge that it should have happened earlier, the balance of spending on prevention and early action has increased year-on-year. The single community budget means savings return to the same pot, which has helped to incentivise investment in preventative services, facilities and resources to the point that they now dominate council thinking. It is recognised that this is the only way to ensure that people are not just living longer, but also living well.

# Clive Betts MP

## MP for Sheffield South East and Chair of the CLG Select Committee

Anticipating change over 30 years is largely a matter of instinct. I am instinctively an optimist but a pessimistic view of councils 30 years on would see schools completely removed from their responsibility, a new national commissioning body for social care, and, with council tax fixed by central government, just enough money to empty the bins, sweep the streets and cut the grass occasionally. If a bit of money was left over some assistance could be given to volunteers trying to run libraries and recreational facilities in increasingly decrepit facilities.

Alternatively the inherent optimist would see councils as the democratic heart of our communities, with a written constitutional role, responding to local wishes, coordinating comprehensive public services, playing a lead role in economic development and being able to raise much of their own revenue from a variety of sources. The very optimistic view might even allow me to live long enough to see this.

# Roberta Blackman-Woods MP

## MP for the City of Durham and former Head of Policy at LGiU

Councils will have embraced new technology to really engage their citizens in shaping how their area looks and the type of services their councils provide. For example council meetings will be open to public questions via Skype or social media with all council meetings being readily available live and via digital download to people's homes. Meetings whether taking place virtually or face to face will have a strong interactive element for citizens to encourage active engagement in the oversight and direction of council policy. It will be possible for local people to easily download key council documents such as financial costings and interrogate council reports via an automatic online response system.

Good councils will understand the need for technology to sustain and enhance face to face interaction and good quality support services for their community rather than replacing them with it.

The council will focus on who can best deliver their services locally with a strong emphasis on employing the local population and skilling the next generation on the vital role public services play in creating strong, vibrant, inclusive and effective communities.

The above is what I hope will happen but it is just as possible given the current climate that councils will simply co-ordinate a range of services provided by the private sector within a strong market focus. There will be little meaningful community engagement or commitment to quality with council services being restricted to those that can't afford a market solution themselves.

**“Rather than ‘one man bands’ I think and hope that councils will be ‘conductors of orchestras’: demonstrating leadership...brokering solutions...and making the most of all the available local assets.”**

**Caroline Abrahams  
Charity Director, Age UK**

# Christine Blower

## General Secretary, National Union of Teachers

In 30 years' time, policy makers would have learnt the lessons of the very unwelcome educational experiments of the coalition government of 2010-15. There will be a political consensus that vital 'middle-tier' tasks cannot be micro-managed by the DfE or by unelected academy chains or sponsors or stand-alone academies.

Councils, in 2043, will act as the champion of local children and families, ensuring equity of access and provision for all children. The local council will also be able to offer its schools:

- expert procurement advice and practices
- economies of scale in service provision
- discounts and preferential arrangements with suppliers of goods and services
- tried and tested advice, including good practice in areas like school improvement
- continuous professional development for teachers reflecting specific local needs and circumstances
- effective and efficient multi-agency links
- a vital source of meaningful data
- a central collaborative hub.

To ensure that they receive the support they need to achieve their very best, schools will now have been returned to local democratic control. The confusion that was caused by the free for all approach to education provision in 2013 will have ended and local authorities will now quite rightly be responsible for:

- planning pupil places – managing surpluses and needs
- encouraging school collaboration
- providing support on SEN and other important services
- challenging and supporting schools

- overseeing fair admissions policies
- checking schools' self-evaluation as the method of school accountability
- estimating needs for teacher and staff recruitment.

There will always, of course, be a need for continued debate and scrutiny to ensure local government is equipped to provide high quality places and raise standards. Our education system is a public good and a public service that must be held to account by taxpayers.

I strongly believe, however, that both now and in the future, the role of a local democratically accountable 'middle tier' is vital and to undermine the powers of local authorities will be viewed as a costly and damaging mistake.

# Rt Hon David Blunkett MP

## MP for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough and co-founder of LGiU

When 30 years ago we held the first meeting of what was then the Local Government Campaign Unit in the town hall in Sheffield, I would not honestly have believed that it, as LGiU, would still be going strong. When as the first chair of the Unit, I set out to offer both a radical voice for those engaged in local government in a variety of guises, and to share best practice and reform, the pressures on local government seemed greater than ever before.

However, the situation today is substantially more grave. Not only has funding been reduced from central government way beyond any other element of central government spending, but the alternative forms of funding have already been exhausted over these past 30 years. So, raising horizons and providing optimism for the future is crucial, if decent men and women are to stand for, work for or in other ways be engaged in, this critical element of our local democracy.

Thinking afresh, engaging people in decisions in their own neighbourhood and areas of interest and joining together in cross-boundary initiatives, can make a difference, both to the potential for meeting need and winning support for, local government. From providing a voice for parents and students in an autonomous school system, through to neighbourhood budgeting and support for self-help and social enterprise programmes, a new role for local government is emerging.

Not quite as new as we think. The early days of local government and the enterprise, which was displayed against all the odds, provides at least some comfort at a time of eye-watering austerity, but also an example of how creative those early days of the pioneers really could be. LGiU is now crucial in sharing innovation, offering support and helping to retain the morale of those who make both our civil society and the most hands on element of our democracy work. Good luck for the next 30 years.

# Clr Paul Carter

## Leader, Kent County Council

To look 30 years ahead and predict what a local council might look like in 2043, I start by thinking back to 1983 and the changes we've seen across the sector in the last 30 years.

Whilst some things have changed significantly, with a far more open and competitive market for local authority services significantly improving efficiency, and the way councils engage and deliver services to residents transformed through the use of ICT and the internet, the fundamental role and purpose of a local council hasn't really changed at all.

The provision of local public services, meeting the needs of both the community as a whole and the most vulnerable members of our communities will still be what the local council is for.

Fundamentally, there is no better vehicle that allows the level of efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness in the delivery of local public services than a local council. Victorians understood this in the late 19th century, and I don't think that will change by the mid-21st century.

Yes, there may be restructures and reconfigurations. Two-tier local government may go, or it may not. Services will be designed and redesigned and, possibly, redesigned again to meet ever changing needs. The continued importance of technology will drive more changes in the relationship between the citizen and the council, beyond what any of us can realistically predict.

We will have shifted the balance of health and social care spending from the acute sector and into excellent community health and primary care services, because we simply have no choice given the demographics, if we want to maintain some form of NHS and social care system.

Local authorities will still lead change because we must. As democratically

elected bodies, we will always respond to local community needs, and make those difficult choices, better than Whitehall or faceless quangos.

If I have hope, it is this. That by 2043 the relationships between central and local government has matured beyond the fractured and disconnected engagement we have increasingly seen from Westminster and Whitehall since 1983.

This does not mean some form of faux constitutional protection for local authorities, but a mature adult relationship which allows local authorities to flourish without having their wings clipped.

**“In 2043, a new relationship with central government has arrived. Having undergone 30 years of painful transformation, Whitehall activity has been redistributed across the nation.”**

**Neil McInroy  
Chief Executive, Centre for  
Local Economic Strategies**

# Sir Merrick Cockell

## Chairman of the Local Government Association

Over the next thirty years there will be significant challenges to the way councils operate, alongside real opportunities to innovate and develop how we serve our residents.

By 2043 the UK population is expected to rocket towards 80 million, an increase of a third. The demographics will also have shifted significantly with the number of those past retirement age living far longer than today. In fact, more than 95,000 people who were aged 65 in 2012 are expected to celebrate their 100th birthday in 2047. With these increases in age and numbers of residents come serious issues related to demand.

With people living longer, with complex conditions, the system of social care must be able to deal with the increases to demand. Likewise our schools, housing, roads and other infrastructure must be fit for purpose.

We have to also accept that the jobs market of 2043 will be different and how we prepare young people, and retrain those in long-term work, will be essential. Just as last century's manufacturing jobs were replaced by mechanisation, the next 100 years will see software and technology replace hundreds of thousands of roles in 'middle class' professions such as law, medicine and management.

2043 may seem far away but in planning terms it is just around the corner. Local government has the knowledge and data on their areas to map out the priorities today, not tomorrow. However, councils need to be freed to make the long-term decisions and given the tools to allow them to address issues such as funding and planning.

Our "Rewiring Public Services" programme is aimed at meeting these new challenges and to understand local people's future needs and aspirations. Our propositions show how public services can be transformed, through local

leadership, by rebuilding democratic participation, fixing public services and revitalising the economy.

My vision for councils by 2043 is one where councils can respond to these new challenges on a sound financial footing; local people have a clear say in the important matters that face them and their local communities and we have a rejuvenated democracy where every vote matters.

# CLlr Patrick Diamond

**London Borough of Southwark, former Head of Policy Planning at 10 Downing Street and former senior policy advisor to the Prime Minister**

The council of 2043 will be exercising much greater political power, as politicians in Whitehall came to recognise the imperative of passing back power to communities in order to solve pressing challenges, from ensuring an increasingly ageing population receives adequate social care, through to advancing opportunities for young people from the most disadvantaged communities. The myth that this could be achieved through top-down, central government policy-making finally imploded, and councils had much greater freedoms to innovate, raise resources, borrow on the capital markets, and work with multi-agency partners.

The council of the future is part of an emerging 'sharing economy' where there is no longer a passive, one-way relationship between citizens and providers; but instead a web of reciprocity, co-creation and mutuality leading to very different kinds of service provision at local level in every sphere from housing to services for looked after children. Increasingly, councils are focusing on how to understand and adopt workable ideas tried and tested by others, both from within the UK and from further afield.

# Clr Ruth Dombey

## Leader, Sutton Council

A ship is safe in harbour – but that’s not what ships are for. The council of the future will be very different – a smaller workforce, nimbler and more imaginative in their response to residents’ expectations and more representative of their communities.

By 2043 there will have been a fundamental redistribution of government funding. The Treasury and Whitehall will have loosened the reins and devolved sizeable budgets and responsibilities to local councils and local communities. Local authorities will benefit from a mature municipal bonds funding agency and there will be less ring-fenced funding and more community budgeting across the public sector as a whole.

The devolution of power and funding will mean that councils will be freed up to tailor solutions to their local areas. But they will also have learnt to work across borough differences and establish sub-regional groups of local authorities to address issues like waste, integrated health and social care and climate change. Councils in 2043 will be building social and affordable housing and bringing together public sector partners to deliver joined-up, preventative services. They will be more skilled in their ability to enable partnerships, encouraging voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver services and working across local authority boundaries to support families and communities. They will work more closely with the private sector and local businesses to develop strong local economies.

There will be greater accountability to local residents and greater democratic involvement as central government loosens its grip and local communities are empowered to play a more active part in decision-making. The culture of dependency will be a thing of the past and there will be a greater interest for people to take an active part in their local communities, setting priorities, shaping their local area and building resilient communities. Personally I can’t wait til 2043 – the sooner, the better!

# Jonathan Flowers

**Local Government Market Director, Capita**

“**B**looming monobuses, you wait and wait and then three come at once”

“Yeah, too right... how you doing in your new flat?”

“It’s alright actually, me and the missus are choosing our council package tonight.”

“What are you thinking about getting?”

“Well, obviously we’ll be getting the standard citizen package, and we’ll both be taking the free ID-phones because we don’t mind them knowing where we are if we get a free phone out of it, but we’re thinking about our extras.”

“I always go for the health care plus.”

“What do you get in that one?”

“Well you get your credits towards the dementia insurance, health checks and double credits for using the leisure centre once a week, so that’s included”

“Mary gets the dementia insurance credits for us both through her work policy, so we’ll do pay as you go on the leisure centre, but we’re thinking about getting the waste booster.”

“What does that one get you?”

“Choose the day of the week for collection, though we’ll probably go with the default option to get a discount on that; double collections and a tree at Christmas, unlimited cardboard and they sort your recycling for you.”

“That’s just lazy, we get the kids to do ours, to earn their pocket money.”

“Yeah, well we’ve got to decide where to get our advice package from, because we’re going to want help applying for schools, and we’re thinking about putting in an application for a conservatory.”

“What have you narrowed it down to?”

“Well we used to get our advice package from Staffordshire when we lived in the black country, but now that we live in Dalston we’re thinking of getting it from somewhere more local, like Barnet... their app gets five stars in the govstore, and it’s only £500 a month.”

“Nice one. ”

**“The council of the future will be very different – a smaller workforce, nimbler and more imaginative in their response to residents’ expectations and more representative of their communities.”**

**Cllr Ruth Dombey,  
Leader, Sutton Council**

# Rt Hon Lady Margaret Hodge MP

## MP for Barking, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and co-founder of LGiU

As leader of Islington Council, I experienced firsthand how hard but important it is for a council to adapt and respond to new challenges.

Councils today are under enormous pressure, with huge cuts to their budgets. But I know that local authorities are brilliant at responding to different challenges. Indeed not only are you providing an effective dent shield in your communities, but you are grasping the challenge of the cuts to innovate and find new and better ways of delivering services. Change happens so fast. It's difficult to predict what the council of 2043 will look like but I do have some thoughts.

Many areas are facing a housing crisis, with some 4.5 million people waiting for an affordable home, yet last year only 115,000 new homes were built in England. With such slow progress this will continue to put a heavy burden on councils. By 2043 they will have had to examine radical new options, such as using their Pension Funds to become institutional investors in residential developments, to help stem the crisis.

By 2043 libraries and leisure facilities will have transformed. When faced with the prospect of enormous budget cuts these are usually the first casualties, despite their popularity. With more cuts likely, councils will have to find ways of protecting these services – for example via asset transfer, with libraries and leisure facilities mutualised or operating as co-ops.

As the private sector plays an increasing role in delivering public services, councils in urban areas where residents are hit hardest by private sector failings – from the private rental market to the Work Programme – will have to step in and expand their range of activity. This could mean by 2043 councils running employment agencies, estate agents and even community banks, to ensure their residents are not ripped off or left behind.

# Chris Horlick

## Managing Director of Care, Partnership

The role of local authorities has evolved over time and there is no doubt that it will continue to do so. Indeed, while local authorities currently look closely at how they can get the most out of their increasingly tight budgets, they are likely to have one eye on the future to try and prepare for the needs of their ever growing and changing society.

What we do know is that we have a rapidly ageing population, which alongside advancements in medical treatments and technology means that people are living longer. This is of course something we must celebrate, but it does mean that local authorities will continue to see a huge demand for adult social care services.

With no obvious increase in government funding in the foreseeable future, local authorities will need to continue to look for new and innovative ways to make savings while still delivering the best possible services. At the same time, as has been demonstrated by the proposals set out in the Care Bill, more duties will be placed upon local authorities to deliver services to their populations.

It is clear that integration of health and social care is seen as a solution, and we can therefore predict that the councils of 2043 will have already fully integrated these services years in advance. However, one of the biggest challenges which will need to be overcome by local authorities is that of a culture shift towards more and better joint working between the public and private sectors so that services can be commissioned and delivered to an ever growing population. Both trust and relationships will need to be built between the two to ensure that this can happen.

Whatever is on the horizon for councils, they will continue to play a critical role in the lives of their citizens.

# Catherine Howe

## Chief Executive, Public-i

**W**e are at a pivotal moment with respect to how local government will shape itself over the next 30 years, as rapidly shrinking budgets are creating more innovative and risk-taking organisations. I believe that the outcome of this will be councils that are smaller, more agile and more networked.

The kind of leadership that this shift demands will be a key component of local government going forward, and should result in councils being central to their communities as more than simply service providers. This will only be possible if we have also shifted the relationship with the public to be more open, and our democratic processes to be more responsive to the needs of 21st century society.

I find it impossible to imagine this without a successful shift to digital by default – but this needs to be mindful both of the people needing help making that shift, and the face to face interaction that we want to preserve. Being digital by default means the creation of shared digital and civic space where communities and councils can network and collaborate – not simply pushing 19th century transactions online.

The local government of 2043 will also be more confident in its ability to drive local economic growth. Rather than a postcode lottery driven by Westminster, regional differences will be turned into positive choices by local people.

# Richard Humphries

**Assistant Director, Policy, The King's Fund**

If a week is a long time in politics, as the late Harold Wilson used to say, then 30 years is an eternity. Local government's relationship with the NHS will be 95 years old in 2043 – by then we will know whether the 2012 Health and Social Care Act really was a game-changing shift in the relationship between these two great public service silos.

There is all to play for. Many aspects of the changes, if successful, will be so embedded in what councils do that we will simply take them for granted – or they will have long disappeared. Health and Wellbeing Boards for example will either be the 'go-to' place for serious local decisions about health and care – or added to the roll-call of partnership initiatives that promised more than they delivered.

30 years will be long enough for councils to demonstrate how their public health role has made a real difference to the health of local people – though as ever much will depend on the political will of governments to embrace national policies in contentious areas like alcohol pricing. And with the frail older population and people with dementia set to at least double by 2043, the fault line between universal health care and means tested, rationed social care will be tested to its limits.

The current fragmentation of commissioning across the myriad number of NHS bodies and councils is not sustainable and current aversion to more structural change may weaken as the drumbeat for integrated care grows louder. But there's a big "but" – our public policy tradition is to muddle through rather than embrace difficult, radical change. So 'plus ça change plus c'est la même chose' may be a more realistic scenario for 2043.

# ClIr Tony Jackson

## Leader, East Herts Council and LGiU board member

In 2043 unified public service will be at the heart of local authorities' and local councillors' responsibilities to a far greater degree than today.

Co-ordination of public service delivery could be through 'public service boards' accountable to the directly-elected representatives. This should genuinely strengthen local democracy, decision-making and influence.

Greater local freedom will be necessary to secure capital finance to fund longer-term projects, and for a range of local options to raise revenue finance to support service delivery, e.g. direct residential and business taxation and local indirect taxes such as sales and tourism taxes. This presupposes that central government influence over local service delivery decisions is restricted, if necessary through legislation.

Administrative areas will need to be larger than a typical district but smaller than a county in order to ensure there is still a close connection to the democratically elected representatives within a community. Areas of perhaps 300,000-400,000 population with somewhere around 40-50 democratic representatives could be typical.

The strengthening of local authorities' decision-making powers and their accountability to communities for a wider range of public services will inevitably mean that senior democratic representatives will need to be accepted as undertaking a full-time role which is remunerated accordingly.

So in 2043 there could be greater independence for local authorities to raise finance, assume responsibility for public service delivery and genuinely shape their communities resulting in more democratic engagement by residents and businesses.

# Andrew Jepp

## Director of Public Sector, Zurich Municipal

Local authorities have always been a reflection of the disparate communities they serve and in 2043 it seems unlikely we will have a society that is any more resilient in real terms than is currently the case. An increasingly older population, a fall in the ratio of those of working age to retirees and a population with complex needs will continue to put significant strain on our public services.

By 2043 we will have fewer local authorities as budget constraints and efficiencies will have driven the creation of unitary authorities in England with city conurbations emerging as well as mergers of existing unitaries in Wales and Scotland. Councils will be even more agile and self-reliant with few factoring central government grants into their financial considerations. There will be more entrepreneurialism as local authorities continue to lead the way in the public sector in responding to the new reality. This will mean more revenue generation and considerable integration of public services led by local authorities where the democratic mandate will still be crucial.

I think the future will see many of the traditionally outsourced services coming back in house, either being delivered directly or through new service models such as mutuals or local authority joint ventures and probably delivering for larger geographic areas. As part of this, schools will be integrated back into local government in some manner at least to ensure consistency and efficiency through economies of scale.

I think we will still have chief executives; sheep and cattle mowing the grass will be unlikely; parking restrictions will still be important; and we will not go back to weekly waste collections. Critically, the dedication of local authority staff will still be a major factor in the success of local government in delivering essential services to their communities.

**“2043 may seem far away but in planning terms it is just around the corner. Local government has the knowledge and data on their areas to map out the priorities today, not tomorrow.”**

**Sir Merrick Cockell  
Chair of the LGA**

# Alexandra Jones

## Chief Executive, Centre for Cities

Predicting the future is notoriously tough. A hundred years ago, few would have predicted, for example, that Leeds' growth would outstrip that of Bradford. Thirty years ago, computers were few and far between, no one had mobiles and the internet was known to a select few.

The scale of the changes between now and then support Bill Gates' observation that, "we always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten".

Given the pace of technological change, I would expect a similar scale of transformation over the next thirty years. Information will be more accessible and tailored, with devices enabling us to interact with a plethora of services and individuals in different ways. The make-up of the economy will have changed dramatically, with big implications for places across the country.

What will it mean for councils? Pressure on public spending will continue as expectations of public services grow, fuelled by experiences in the private sector, and councils need to be at the heart of responding to this.

Some aspects of councils will stay the same; democratic accountability for decision-making; the strong focus on local interests and services. But there are likely to be fewer councils, covering wider areas, and councils will be commissioning more and delivering less, relying more on partnerships to get things done.

In a world in which cities are likely to be critical to driving economic growth, councils will need to work together to make the most of city centres and to link neighbouring areas, both urban and rural, to help economies to thrive.

Councils – near to local need, knowing their local populations and democratically accountable – will also play a vital role in integrating local

services such as childcare and healthcare in a world in which customised services are likely to be expected and more cost-effective.

Ultimately councils will need to be civic entrepreneurs, becoming more enterprising and innovative in the way they support local economic growth and deliver services, with businesses and other partners taking on a more civic role, and citizens becoming more engaged in the way in which communities are run and services provided.

# Alan Long

## Executive Director, Mears Group

It is a risky business predicting which of today's policy initiatives will be naturalised into local government DNA and which will be cast onto the slagheap of history. As an Executive Director for a PLC that works largely with local government I am interested in how local authorities are beginning to make use of procurement and commissioning practices to achieve wider outcomes. Fast forward 30 years and the Lyons concept of place shaping will have moved from outlier authorities to being common practice. The practice of place shaping will require a market stewardship role for local authorities.

Evolving out of necessity (which in my book equals increasing demand coupled with decreasing budgets) we shall see little in the way of direct delivery of services such as home care but local authorities will increasingly use their influencing powers to shape local markets. To do this effectively local authorities will need to act as a conduit bringing key components together to broker agreements and influence the direction of travel.

It won't be an easy journey – and we will need to challenge the mistrust between sectors but the end point will be a new era for localism.

# Neil McInroy

## Chief Executive, Centre for Local Economic Strategies

**W**e must aim for a good society in 2043 – where poverty is banished and there are opportunities for all. In 2043, the environment is nurtured not exploited, and local wealth generation is captured locally and shared more fairly. In 2043, voluntary action is not the cheap service option, but an integral, respected and grant-supported part of local place success. In 2043, unions and business, glued by mutual love of a good local society, work together for the benefit of the economy and the people. In 2043, sentiments such ‘private good, public bad’, are seen as silly, in a time when both are interdependent and good.

Local government is the curator of this ideal, nurturing the conditions for ongoing economic and social progress. Key to this is deep collaborative working with the commercial and social sectors. This interdependency is wedded into local consciousness and behaviour and embedded through local social contracts into the DNA of public service delivery. Local government has a key representative democratic role, but there is a ‘new democratic deal’ with participative forms, co-creating services with citizenry. Public services provide what the market can’t do efficiently or effectively, and are proactive in preventing expensive need by capturing issues upstream, before they become critical and expensive. The actions of business and social sectors support this reduction in demand.

Finally, all local government will be unitary and equal in powers. All will have more direct control over their own finances. In 2043, a new relationship with central government has arrived. Having undergone 30 years of painful transformation, Whitehall activity has been redistributed across the nation. From its small – but redistributively powerful – coordination hub in Walsall, central government will finally embrace local government as co-directors of the nation.

# Simon Parker

## Director, New Local Government Network

One of the first rules of futurology is never to make predictions. The future is determined by so many interlinking trends and drivers, including technologies none of us can yet imagine, that it is foolhardy to claim that we can see 20 years into the future with any kind of clarity. But we do have a pretty clear sense of the factors that will shape the world of 2043, and by understanding these we can plan more effectively.

It seems likely that we will see an ongoing reshaping of the role of the local state. Even if the British economy can be persuaded to deliver sustained growth, and a substantial portion of the growth can be captured in taxation, the state as a whole will probably remain under huge financial pressure due to the costs of ageing. Councils will probably continue to face rising demand and constrained resources.

One way to manage the resource squeeze on the UK's public finances will be to import large numbers of young migrants. Some parts of London are already 'majority minority' and this may well spread across larger parts of the country. The evidence tells us that it is very hard to maintain high levels of social capital alongside high levels of population churn. This does not make migration a bad thing in the slightest, but it does mean that our communities will remain in flux. Migrant nations like the US and Australia tend to have smaller, more market-oriented welfare states and we may well decide that this is preferable to becoming an insular island fortress.

Everything we know about the shape of the next economy tells us that it will probably lead to greater levels of inequality (although perhaps also more meritocracy). Unless the UK is somehow able to generate large numbers of middle-wage jobs, or the public's attitudes to redistribution change dramatically, the hourglass distribution of resources across society is only going to get worse. Councils will have to deal with the fall-out.

It is hard to imagine a 2043 in which we have abundant natural resources. The sheer weight of population growth across the planet will increase competition for fossil fuels and drive a reliance on nuclear and renewables (barring the development of a reliable fusion engine). Councils may well have a much larger role in managing local energy and resource security.

The flipside of these very deep challenges will be huge opportunities to transform the very nature of a council through technology. In healthcare, we can already see a future where people monitor their own health in real time and interact with medics online to spot problems early.

Aspects of social care may become similarly decentralised, while smart metering and local energy production could link a household's energy bill to its recycling rates. Citizens may be persuaded to do more for themselves not through the magic of community participation, but through being put in control of the right kinds of information.

Thirty years into the future, large parts of local government as we know it may well be either irrelevant or unaffordable. All we can say with confidence is that it will look very different.

**“In a world in which cities are likely to be critical to driving economic growth, councils will need to work together to make the most of city centres and to link neighbouring areas, both urban and rural, to help economies to thrive.”**

**Alexandra Jones  
Chief Executive,  
Centre for Cities**

# Clr Lib Peck

## Leader, London Borough of Lambeth

Councillors of 2043 look back on 2013 as a seminal moment in the evolution of local authorities. Starved of funding all councils faced a dramatic choice about their future direction.

Many decided that wholesale outsourcing was the only and cheapest way to deliver a shrunken menu of services. For other councils, such as the pioneering then London Borough of Lambeth (now part of the South London authority) the dire financial situation added impetus to the cooperative approach that the council had adopted several years earlier: putting residents at the heart of decision making. It meant identifying strengths and skills in the community and building on those; it meant that decisions were made on a social as well as financial basis. In doing so, the cooperative approach generated a wealth of innovative ways and means to deliver activities – with the council providing a platform to make things happen rather than delivering itself.

By 2043 it was generally agreed that the councils taking this cooperative approach had called it right, that it helped build and support strong resilient communities.

The councils of 2043 had become the connectors and enablers of local society: assessing local needs; joining up the right people and right organisations; enabling the most creative and socially productive projects; and critically, acting as the custodian of the peoples values.

As a result, the class of 2043 councillors were more reflective and representative of the local communities they served. They were more likely to host an online discussion forum than to deliver a leaflet. And, of course, the change in the electorate, which meant that 15 year olds had a full vote and any young person from the age of 11 had half a vote, had brought fresh political ideas to the fore.

In London the radical Social Mix Movement of 2020s re-emphasised the importance of politics. Tired of the increasing homogenisation of London culture brought about by high land prices and welfare cuts, SMM had been successful in its demand for policies to ensure London returned to having a genuine mix of people from different backgrounds and cultures. This prompted a renaissance in political thinking and action, which encouraged many to participate in local politics for the first time and helped to re-establish local councillors as a much respected profession!

# Richard Puleston

## Director for Strategy and Communications Essex County Council

Any time capsule from today about what the council of 2043 will look like runs the risk of looking as ridiculous and full of hubris to our descendants as jetpacks and meals in the form of pills do from 1950s 'Tomorrow's World' shows.

If a week is a long time in politics, then 30 years is several life times. Back in 1983, Bill Gates' vision of a computer in every home seemed a distant pipe dream; the UK's first mobile phone was still two years away from being launched. But if it's difficult to foresee the future, there are some universal truths and inescapable challenges that councils will have to recognise and overcome no matter what the makeup of local governance is by the middle of the century.

It is inconceivable that the tide which rolled out over the last five years will come back in during our lifetime. So the future council will be smaller and will have managed the transition of service delivery with diminished resources. Councils will act more as the guarantor of effective and efficient services than a direct provider.

That role will demand that the future council acts as a local leader of place in a way that was first foreseen by Joseph Chamberlain, the great nineteenth century reforming Mayor of Birmingham who established that local government was much more than a council chamber; it has the duty to influence agendas as diverse as public health and education.

Future councils therefore need to lead and bring together agencies from the national to the hyperlocal around outcomes, not organisations. They will compel new technology to lie at the heart of personalised services delivered from multi-agency teams. And they will require the legitimacy from a new social contract with residents engaging them in genuine democratic decisions and translating the role of the councillor away from direct decision-maker to place-based influencer and 'outcomes champion'.

# Liz Richardson

## Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Manchester and co-editor of Local Government Studies

A citizen contacts the council with a bright idea for making a local service better. Their proposal to the council gets a quick and positive response: “how can we help you develop this further?” Before contacting the council, the resident was able to test out their tentative proposal. This was an easy job to do online. A request to use the authority’s panel of ‘citizen scientists’ – keen, trained, lay researchers – was accepted. The citizen scientists were mobilised to collect evidence and upload it to the central intelligence hub. An initial peer review of the idea’s feasibility by the interactive community e-forum also made some helpful suggestions for changes.

Council staff, discussing the bright idea, reflect on the changes to how things would have happened 30 years ago. Only a few old timers remember the days of traditional ‘consultation’, which now seems quaintly clunky, but depressingly oppositional. The new approach of co-productive dialogue with residents, co-design of services, backed up by quality real-time intelligence, is a world away from those days. And it is now hard to imagine *not* seeing citizens as assets, equal partners, and problem-solvers.

Local Elected Members join the conversation with citizens early on. They too are enjoying the new style of working. All the different organisations in the locality are going in the same direction – delivering Members’ strategic framework and vision. Keeping on top of all this activity and co-ordinating is hard work. But members relish this more organic way of working. Their accountability agreements with partners focus on delivery of outcomes. This helps reduce any risks, and ensures results.

# Giles Roca

## Head of Strategy, Westminster City Council

Councils will no longer exist as we currently know them by 2043. Instead, a series of democratically elected local leaders with a mandate as the guarantor of all public services across functional economic areas will emerge.

Such leaders will have responsibilities and powers now the preserve of the Whitehall including welfare, employment support, skills and taxation – they themselves will have a duty for reducing inequality whilst making their areas economically attractive and prosperous.

The leaders will hold to account the full range of blue light services scrutinising the work of the NHS and overseeing local justice models.

Local leaders will need to work together to improve connectiveness in areas such as transport, IT infrastructure and global networks to attract new investment both nationally and internationally.

Devolution along the lines envisaged by the London Finance Commission will mean that leaders will have the full range of fiscal tools available to them to target local priorities and attract investment. With this will come new obligations and forms of scrutiny. For example, in return for the localisation of business rates, businesses will have local representation.

Early preventative intervention will run through all future service delivery as leaders recognise that only with such an approach will the issues of an ageing population be tackled. New digital technologies will mean communities will have far greater choice over the services they receive; residents will be able to choose to receive personalised services from any area they wish creating a market within local public services.

Leaders will be held to account by their own local electorates, including business, but also by a new constitutional settlement ensuring their role and

responsibility in statute and meaning that parliament, rightly, will also play a greater role in holding local leaders to account.

That this vision will need fundamental change in structures, models of delivery and mindset is beyond doubt; as it will new devolution and constitutional settlements.

To get there will need strong leadership, determination and a clear vision from today's local politicians. But the prize is well worth the effort – as the vision for local services in 2043 will see local leaders with the full range of tools at their disposal resulting in better, more responsive services and better value for money that will ultimately benefit local people and their communities.

**“It won’t be an easy journey – and we will need to challenge the mistrust between sectors but the end point will be a new era for localism.”**

**Alan Long  
Executive Director  
Mears Group**

# Andy Sawford MP

## MP for Corby, Shadow Local Government Minister and former Chief Executive of LGiU

Congratulations to LGiU on your 30th Anniversary. I am very proud to have been part of your past and hope to work with you towards a bright future for LGiU and for local government.

The world is changing rapidly and councils will be at the forefront of shaping how our communities meet the challenges and look for the opportunities. As globalisation continues and the world becomes more inter-connected, our councils will forge new partnerships with towns and cities. Where today our partnerships, such as LEPs, are shaped with near neighbours, in thirty year's time councils will have forged stronger links for our economies, skills, energy needs, and health and wellbeing. With these relationships will come more political power across the world with the voice of local communities and local democracy heard more loudly.

Demographics will be a powerful driver of change. Councils need to meet the needs of people who are living longer and more active lives. Councils must shape communities where people can live, work and access services in a more flexible way. One example is through a greater emphasis on lifetime housing.

Technology will continue to change what we do and how we do it. People who provide council services will increasingly be out in communities rather than at a desk. Handheld devices are already changing this, but new wearable technology will create more opportunity. Technology will help us meet other challenges too, such as community energy needs.

Our climate is predicted to continue to change and this will impact on everything from transport networks to agriculture and leisure. Councils must continue to think ahead as they plan new developments and work to ensure community resilience.

Democracy will become much noisier and vibrant I hope, with councils engaging communities in new ways, both by becoming more representative and by using opportunities such as social media. People of all ages will expect to be kept informed and to participate in their councils, local businesses and community groups, and wider civil society. Councils will need to adapt formal decision making processes into much more participative democracy.

Funding will be more connected, so that councils are working more effectively across local and national government, and with business and charities, to make the public pound go further. Total Place ideas, where councils are able to lead on local public spending by bringing together many budgets and combining services, will be the reality, and with it councils will have become more independent of central government.

Thirty years will pass in the blink of an eye and the only thing we know for certain is that the future will bring surprises. LGiU's role will be more important as we go forward, keeping councils informed, generating and sharing ideas, and championing local government. Happy Anniversary and good luck!

# Lord Shipley OBE

## Government Cities Advisor

Local government will be firmly rooted in neighbourhoods with parish and town councils at the heart of local democracy, elected by proportional representation to prevent domination by single parties. They will procure neighbourhood services from wherever they wish and they will decide levels of council tax. Schools will be part of educational trusts and directly funded. Social care will be integrated with the NHS.

All other local government services including children's services, community safety, regulatory policy, planning policy, housing and transport will be managed at the level of single or combined authorities which will have boundaries co-terminous with their LEPs.

Those authorities will have devolved powers from Whitehall over tax raising other than council tax. Central government will remain responsible for equalisation of resources but the bulk of local income will be locally generated.

# Phyllis Starkey

## Former Leader of Oxford City Council and former Chair of LGiU

**B**y 2043 the pendulum between greater central control and increased localism, and between small state solutions and collective publicly-funded provision will have swung back and forth several times. But as globalisation increases, people's attachment to their locality and desire to shape their own environment remains. The councils of 2043 will be using all the latest technology to communicate with people, businesses and institutions in their area and involve them in shaping the strategic vision for their area and the extent and form of local facilities and service provision.

Power will have become much more fragmented between private, public and voluntary organisations and successful councils will have asserted their role as the site of local accountability and the key broker in bringing together disparate organisations and groups in a shared local strategy. Councils will devolve many decisions down to smaller neighbourhood groups but at the same time, increasingly co-operate and work with neighbouring councils on a strategic level, in self-selecting regional or city groupings.

Local government, by its innovation and mobilisation of local people, will have forced constitutional change at a national level and changed the nature of central government as well.

# Rt Hon Sir Andrew Stunell OBE MP

**MP for Hazel Grove, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at DCLG and former councillor**

**C**ouncil Annual Review and Budget Meeting 2050 (suggested chair's notes).

As chair of the Neighbourhood Councils Forum it is my great privilege to welcome you to our Budget Meeting in the Chamber tonight. For those residents who are tuned in on Channel 10, please note that the annual Tax-and-Spend vote will not commence until the budget debate has concluded. You will need to have activated your citizenship button to vote.

Following the steering committee meeting earlier today I can announce that each of the 215 Neighbourhood Council budgets have been signed off and the total to be raised for the coming year amounts to 750 million euros across the council, with 10 million euros for central administration and Town Hall delivery.

The resolution before you is to raise the Standard Rate of Local Income Tax by 10 cents, but to freeze the Land Tax at 10,000 euros/hectare. Our combined capital budget amounts to 100 million euros, a fall of 20 million euros, reflecting reduced costs following the completion of the zero carbon retrofit programme on the final phase of the pre 2016 housing stock.

We have notified the Treasury of our reduced capital requirement, and advised them that we will be transferring the unspent sum to the regional transport fund to support additional noise reduction measures along the route of HS4.

The council's members of the Combined Regional Authority will be elected at the close of the meeting, and I would again remind on-line residents that you will need to have activated your citizenship button before you vote.

I now call on the Clerk to present the budget. (You may also wish to refer to Tania Creasby's selection for the Olympics).

# Matthew Taylor

## Chief Executive, RSA

Judging by the ever-lower levels of trust in politicians and government we can be said to be living in a time when citizens are unwilling to be governed but not yet willing to govern themselves.

I have no idea what the world let alone local government will look like in 2043 but I know the goal I would like us to set...

Government has been returned to the people. The divide between civic action and state action has broken down. Rather than seeing the local state as an overbearing and distant bureaucracy representing its own interests it would be seen as the institutional embodiment of those things that we agree we would rather do together than alone.

To get to this municipal utopia we need parallel fundamental reform in our political and democratic institutions and the way we conceptualise and organise public services. There are fragments of the thinking we need in today's thought and practice, but only fragments. It might be quite inspiring to set this image of self-government thirty years hence and then work back from there to imagine the steps we would need to take. The RSA is up for it.

On the other hand the world might be by then entirely owned by Amazon and we will all spend our 150-year lifespan living alone in virtual reality pods, taking happy pills and having simulated sex with avatar slaves.

# Heather Wakefield

## Head of Local Government, UNISON

Thirty years from now politics will have shifted its epicentre from a Westminster that is no longer capable of responding to the intricacies of a globalised economy to the local political arena. Here decisions about all public services and community life will be made and here local people will create networks that sustain them in a new era of confirmed scepticism about the ability of markets to deliver public good.

Membership of the local 'council' will truly reflect its population and ensure that women, young people and all minorities are at the heart of decision-making. It will use the latest technology to communicate and regularly seek the views of all its citizens, who will all take some responsibility for decisions which affect their daily lives.

The myth of privatisation's bounty will have finally been dispelled. Taxation will be seen as a public good after politicians convince voters of its benefits and ensure that all taxes are collected. Public money will be mobilised in the public interest, not frittered away on consultants, shareholders and company executives as global ecological limits, a growing population and new demand for services place a strain – even on a larger public purse. The state will no longer be seen as a bad thing – but a responsive and protective force against the harshness of markets.

Trade unions too will make the locality the focus of their organisation, and links between work and life beyond will enhance our relevance. Female leaders will speak for women workers. 'Councils' will acknowledge the benefits of a workforce with strong advocates and work with us to develop ever evolving and better public services, ensuring that all our members are paid a truly 'living wage'. I may be dead, but I can dream...

# Jonathan Werran

Features Editor, The MJ

As a journalist covering local government, I always find myself stumped and gasping for words whenever an interviewee throws back to me the perennial question about the future of the sector. It's so much easier to hear MPs, councillors and experts expound their grave concerns, and proffer well-thought out solutions on managing demand and harnessing finances.

At such dangerous times as these, one is tempted to resort to the patron saint of hack journalists GK Chesterton. The author of 'The Napoleon of Notting Hill', and father of a rather mystical form of localism, would assert the optimist is the true revolutionary "because pessimism appeals to the weaker side of everybody, and the pessimist, therefore, drives as roaring a trade as the publican". On this basis, I would confidently assert that the council of 2043 will be better-placed than its contemporary. The council of the future will be larger, with the establishment of combined authorities the norm.

Sad to say it, Lord Heseltine was right when he said posterity will be as oblivious to the existence of English district councils as their long-departed Celtic counterparts. But to survive three decades into the future, the 2043 local authority must possess a strong tax and finance base from which it can enrich its local economy and deliver high-quality services to a larger population.

The key, as today, will be coping with demographic pressures at both ends of the age-spectrum for a UK population in excess of 75 million. Coping with more than six million over 80 year olds in 2043 will require innovation and an imitation of Japan's ability to adapt to the needs of the elderly.

But resisting accusations of Pollyannaism, I would suggest that what must change in terms of local government's relationship with Whitehall, will have changed over this time.

# Rob Whiteman

## Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

**W**e have seen a seismic shift in local government over the past 30 year and I think it will look fundamentally different again in another 30 years' time.

The past few decades have seen the creation of councils as corporate entities with leaders and cabinets, chief executives and executive mayors replacing the older system of standalone committees supported by the town clerk. In fact the strength of local government in recent times has been this new corporate role.

However the current settlement is now formed of a highly prescribed set of functions granted by the centre in Whitehall. This is opposed to the older freedom of authorities which allowed them to act in the interests of the communities they served using the best levers and means available. For me this conflict means that the present system will not last.

By 2043 local government will either be encouraged to further build its corporate role, leading on local growth and community renewal with new funding sources to support this; or by then central government will have built stronger local stand-alone institutions or created new forms of regional government.

Either way the present lack of a coherent strategy on centralism, regionalism and localism, with no consensus between the major political parties on a way forward cannot last another 30 years, especially if we are to see local government deliver for local communities.

# Clr Dave Wilcox

## Chair of Derbyshire County Council and Chair of LGiU Board

I'd been on the waiting list for Arcadia Walk for about 18 months before a room came free. After two weeks I'm already regretting the choice, but I'm registered for a postal vote and there's no going back. Most of the people in here are decrepit, immobile and incontinent. The flu epidemic scares them. The number of antibiotic resistant strains has gone through the roof. Apart from the jabs, there's not much the council can do about that.

I've discovered, I'm the only one who's signed the voluntary euthanasia pledge, even though the local "100's plenty" option appears on screen every time we open our generation plus-90 tablets.

Visits from families are rare here. "Where there's a will, there's a relative" characterised social care in the 2020's. But in 2031, when the number of hundred-year-olds passed a million, the North of England Government followed the South and transferred responsibility for eldercare back to individuals.

No-one anticipated the impact of all us old gits selling our homes at the same time. House prices dropped like lead budgies. And what do you know? For the second time this century the banks had to be bailed out. The Chinese insistence we joined the New Euro zone as part of the rescue package caused a bit of a stir, but capitalism is still intact. I virtually gave my house away in the end, but never mind. Together with the pension it'll cover the cost of living until I take the tablet in 2047.

I still ponder the purpose of life. But this evening the sunset bathed the room in crimson, my daughter dropped off a bottle of top-whack Kent Pinot Noir 2038 and cook pot-roasted some mutton for tea.

Eat, drink and be melancholy. Perhaps that was life's purpose after all?

# Laura Wilkes

## Former LGiU Policy Manager

We know that between now and 2043 the population is growing and ageing, rapidly; individuals and communities must become owners of deep rooted social problems; the public sector will get less money, not more; technology will transform how we live; and we must adapt to and prevent climate change. We also know that to address these issues, councils must transform, even if we don't yet see the path to getting there.

This means that by 2043 councils need to tackle both global and hyperlocal problems, simultaneously. Councils have to work with neighbourhoods around very local issues determined by communities, which the citizens themselves take responsibility for. So councils must broker relationships in communities as a partnership of equals; invest in community infrastructure, data transfer and technology rather than commissioning services; and support communities to be self-sufficient and socially and economically equal. Community based social work and care must be part of this. Districts, parish and town councils, far from becoming unviable, must take the leading role in this.

Simultaneously, councils have to take on big, global issues, such as economic development, transport, infrastructure, the use of technology and energy markets. This can't be done by small councils so a new wave of combined authorities will be ideally placed to adopt these functions. This means that counties and unitaries will have to define a new role within this structure. With local councils and combined authorities working together, the layer in between could be less relevant.

Of course, we also know that predictions are often a mug's game. But given the scale of challenge coming by 2043, the consequences of not acting to deliver radical change, will be much more complex and problematic for communities.

# Anthony Zacharzewski

**Chief Executive, demsoc**

Speculating on local government in 2043 feels like asking a sailor caught in a storm whether she'd rather land at Portsmouth or at Penzance. "Who cares where, as long as we make it." This storm may calm, but the destination of local government 2043 will depend on a different tide – the effect of technology-driven social change on local democracy.

Health advances hold out the prospect of longer lives, but greater time spent in ill-health – meaning councils will be serving communities with higher needs, and where those with the higher needs have a stronger propensity to vote. By 2050, the share of the population over 65 will be nine percentage points higher than it was in 2000.<sup>1</sup> Factor in declining enthusiasm for party politics among the young, and representative local democracy starts to look pretty unrepresentative.

What will 2043's new voters understand by "local" anyway? Work and socialising will be something that happens online, across boundaries of place, as readily as down the road. That might support local participation, by reinforcing the value of local presence, and softening the boundaries of nation-states to the benefit of super-cities. It might make the local council seem as irrelevant as the Lords Lieutenant.

Strong future communities will need to show people that local participation contributes to international goals, as well as street corner ones, and that people can create a place in the world by supporting their localities.

The present is governed by a tyranny of the past – which makes us the tyrants of 2043 – we can't wait for change to come to us. Local government may feel like a small ship lost in a big storm – but that is just the time when good seamanship matters most.

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1 From 15.6 to 24.3 between 2000 and 2050 (Government Actuaries' Dept)

# Conclusion by Jonathan Carr-West

Chief Executive, LGiU

“Prediction is very difficult” said the physicist Nils Bohr, “especially when it’s about the future.” Whenever we make forecasts about the future we expose ourselves to error. Yet if we do not think about what might happen in the future we drastically curtail our ability to shape it. So we’re hugely grateful to the contributors to this collection who have been brave enough to venture a view on how local government might look a full thirty years from now.

The richness and variety of these contributions resist easy summary, but some key themes come through. There’s a broad consensus that local government must continue to reconcile diminishing resource with a growing set of complex challenges: how to reset local economies, how to care for an ageing population, how to provide young people with the skills they need and decent homes to live in, how to build resilient, supportive communities and many more.

There are different views about whether these challenges will be best met by much larger councils or much more local ones. And there is perhaps more hope than expectation about a radical transfer of power away from Whitehall and Westminster.

At LGiU we believe that’s a prize worth fighting for because the challenges we face are too complex and too particular to be solved by broad national solutions. Instead we must draw on the creativity and civic energy of local communities and we must think differently about our roles as citizens, seeing ourselves not simply as consumers of public services but as genuine partners in them.

Sadly, we do not have thirty years to plan this transformation. The challenge is now. The insights collected here do not constitute a plan or a road map, but we hope they will provide some points of inspiration from which to start.

**“The role will demand that the future council acts as a local leader of place in a way that was first foreseen by Joseph Chamberlain...”**

**Richard Puleston  
Director for Strategy  
and Communications  
Essex County Council**