

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, Committee Stage, House of Commons

About the Local Government Association (LGA)

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government.

We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils, so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

Executive summary

- **Role of councils:** The Bill should enshrine the role of councils in shaping and delivering devolution. This means setting clear expectations for how councils will be involved in regional strategies through a new Duty to Engage, and strengthening the role of council leaders in the governance structures of SAs.
- **Governance:** To ensure that consensus is at the heart of English devolution, we are advocating for councils to have a stronger voice in formal governance arrangements. This includes the removal of the Mayor's casting vote in instances where decision-making is tied for Spatial Development Strategies and Local Transport Plans; a review of simple majority voting after 12 months, with a view to amending voting thresholds where needed; and the option for local places to adopt weighted voting, where there is local need due to large population disparities between constituent councils, and local support.
- **Fiscal devolution:** A statutory power within the Bill for local areas to impose a levy on overnight stays in accommodation within their area, to be known as a "local tourism levy". A levy would provide revenue to support sustainability and development of the local visitor economy. Genuine devolution means giving

local areas the powers and tools to shape their own futures. This includes the ability to raise and control resources, define local priorities, and lead integrated public services in ways that reflect local needs.

- **Strategic competencies:** Expansion of the devolution framework to include more detail on the competency surrounding environment and climate change, and inclusion of a competency on culture, tourism and creative industries.
- **Pensions:** The Government has announced its support for councillor and mayoral pensions; this legislation should be brought forward as soon as possible to support people from all walks of life running for election. The Government should also ensure there is provision for auto-enrolment.
- **Ministerial directive:** Support for additional statutory tests and parliamentary oversight to limit the use of the ministerial powers included in the Bill to establish, expand and impose mayors on SAs without local consent. These powers should only be used as a last resort, to avoid devolution islands, where local agreement cannot be achieved.
- **Committee Governance System:** Currently, 38 councils have chosen to operate a committee governance system, either through a referendum or council decision; these democratic decisions should not be disregarded. Further to this, all councils currently have the option to move to a committee system if they and their communities feel it would be beneficial for local decision-making. This flexibility in local governance should be preserved for future authorities.
- **A Fair Settlement for London:** A Combined Board model, as proposed by London local authorities, would ensure that boroughs have a formal decision-making role within the Greater London Authority (GLA). This would bring London in line with other SAs and enable better collaboration, outcomes, and value for money in public services across the region.
- **Member Standards and Conditions:** The current standards regime is not fit for purpose. The Government has committed to reforming the system, as well as other changes, such as introducing remote attendance for councillors and legislating to protect councillors' home addresses from publication. These reforms should be incorporated into the EDCEB to ensure that new authorities

are established with these protections and powers in place from the outset. In addition, commissioners should be explicitly in scope of anticipated reforms to the standards regime for local authorities, creating a common standard of conduct and behaviour for all those in public life in local and regional government.

- **Audit:** The provision requiring local authorities to have an audit committee, and for that committee to have at least one independent member, must be handled carefully. Government must issue statutory guidance on what constitutes “independent”, the appropriate skill requirements, remuneration levels and a solution for those authorities who are unable to recruit suitable local capacity, potentially through a national pool.

Part 1: Strategic Authorities

Clause 2: Areas of competence

The LGA seeks to amend this clause to see culture (arts, heritage and libraries), tourism, and creative industries (as defined in the [Industrial Strategy](#)) recognised on a national footing as drivers of the local economy, of place-based development and of wellbeing through the form of an additional competency. These sectors contribute to national and regional growth, and this should be formally reflected within the devolution framework.

This additional competency would empower Mayors, working in partnership with constituent authorities, to identify strategic collaborations at a regional level, taking account of any sub-sector regional specialisms or strengths (such as screen industries or tourism). It is crucial that this competency complements, not duplicates, the existing duties and responsibilities held by local government. It would assist those six Mayoral SAs to invest the devolved £150 million Creative Places Growth Fund, and the Tees Valley Creative Investment Zone funding, as announced in the Industrial Strategy. Constituent authorities would remain responsible for place-based cultural strategy and delivery, tailored to local needs and opportunities.

A mayoral competency on culture, tourism and creative industries would provide:

- Strategic leadership and convening power.
- Integrated place-based planning linking culture, tourism and creative industries

with transport, housing, health, and regeneration

- Enhanced coordination of funding and investment strategies
- Improved evidence for decision-making and data for impact measurement.

Clause 4: Combined authorities and CCAs: establishment, expansion and functions

Paragraph 14: Proposal for a new combined authority (Secretary of State directed)

It is right that areas come together and agree to form new SAs. The LGA is concerned by the breadth of this clause. We need commitment to ensure that the Ministerial powers to establish, expand, and impose a mayor on SAs, without local consent, will be used as a last resort to limit top-down reorganisation.

To limit the use of this power before it is absolutely necessary to avoid devolution islands, the LGA wishes to see further safeguards included in the Bill, in the form of an additional statutory test and parliamentary oversight. The principles included in the English Devolution White Paper (EDWP) to determine appropriate geographies for any new SAs should be formalised in the Bill:

- Scale: Have a comparable size to existing institutions, enabling effective delivery of devolved functions.
- Economies: Reflect functional economic areas, including local labour markets and current and potential travel-to-work patterns. This should include consideration of rural economies, and where travel to work areas are small and fragmented. SAs must be capable of supporting coherent economic strategies, including Local Growth Plans and Spatial Development Strategies.
- Identity: Reflect a coherent local identity that supports public engagement and democratic accountability. Demonstrate how residents will be able to recognise, engage with, and hold to account their devolved institutions.
- Contiguity: Contiguous across current and potential constituent councils. Where contiguity is not currently met, there must be a clear and agreed plan for achieving it through local government reorganisation.
- No 'devolution islands': Must not create devolution 'islands' i.e. areas left too small to form viable authorities or lacking natural partners. Demonstrate how surrounding areas will be integrated or supported to ensure inclusive devolution.

- **Delivery:** Be capable of delivering key strategic functions, including:
 - a. Spatial Development Strategies, Local Transport Plans and Get Britain Working Plans.
 - b. Show evidence of institutional capacity and readiness to implement devolved responsibilities.
- **Alignment:** Promote alignment between devolution boundaries and other public sector boundaries, including health, policing, transport and fire. Minimise administrative complexity and duplication.

To ensure appropriate and sufficient consideration of local identity, the legislation should set out a definition of local identity:

- "Local identity" means the shared sense of belonging, cultural heritage, civic recognition, and geographic association experienced by residents of a defined area, which contributes to their ability to engage with, understand, and hold to account local institutions.
- In determining the presence of local identity, the Secretary of State shall have regard to:
 - a. The historical and cultural coherence of the area, including recognised place-names, traditions, and community institutions.
 - b. The patterns of civic participation, including local democratic engagement, voluntary activity, and public consultation responses.
 - c. The geographic recognisability of the area to its residents and neighbouring communities.
 - d. The extent to which the proposed governance arrangements reflect and reinforce existing local identity rather than fragment or obscure it.

There should be sufficient parliamentary oversight for the use of such a strong Ministerial power. The LGA recommends:

- The Secretary of State publish a geography assessment statement demonstrating how a proposal to establish or expand an SA meets the statutory test, and submit this for parliamentary scrutiny, subject to the affirmative

resolution procedure.

- Introduction of a sunset clause, to impose a time limit on the use of these powers, aligning to the government's ambition to achieve 100 per cent devolution in England, and impose a requirement to seek parliamentary approval for any extension to use these powers.

Statutory role for councils: Duty to engage and co-produce plans

If the EDCEB is to fully realise its ambitions of devolution, it must enshrine councils' role in shaping and delivering devolution. The LGA's peer-led research, [Supporting Councils within a Combined Authority Context \(2025\)](#), identifies a cooperative decision-making process as a key factor in successful cooperation in CAs. What specifically supports constituent councils to work effectively within an MCA context includes defining and understanding respective roles and responsibilities and how these relate to the shared ambition and recognising how this can and will change over time.

This requires the legislation setting out a strong role for councils within each of the SA areas of competence, which builds on each partner's respective strengths, experience, and powers. This should be enshrined in the Bill, alongside clear expectations for how councils will be involved in shaping and delivering regional strategies.

As a first step, to fully embed a model of partnership working, this clause should include an additional paragraph setting out a duty on mayors and the strategic authority to engage with constituent councils and broader local government to co-produce plans, schemes and strategies, including Local Growth Plans (LGPs) and micromobility schemes.

There are examples where decision-making has broken down due to a feeling that a local authority has been excluded from a process. Introducing this statutory duty to engage would help to embed best practice in statute. It builds upon similar measures within the Bill, such as Schedule 17 which requires the Mayor of a Strategic Authority to consult with constituent councils in the establishment of Mayoral Development Corporations.

[LGA research](#) outlines the importance of sustaining a strong collaborative approach. Both councils and MCAs highlighted the importance of informal governance and the ability to have honest, and early, conversations prior to formal processes. Transition points, for example changes in leadership, often acted as moments of reset and required increased effort to build and maintain relationships and a collaborative culture. A track-record of joint working can support enduring positive relationships, but it does not guarantee them:

fostering effective relationships requires significant and sustained officer and political commitment.

Whilst a move towards standardised decision-making arrangements through simple majority voting by nature includes constituent members votes, implementing a duty to engage would ensure this sustained commitment to effective partnership working between the mayor, strategic authority and local government on plans, schemes and strategies from the outset, leading to more easily achieved consensus at decision-making and adoption of said plans.

Clause 6: Combined authorities and CCAs: decision-making and validity of proceedings

Local safeguards to decision-making

Whilst the LGA recognises the need for effective decision-making, and we see the value in part in introducing more standardised voting requirements, we are concerned at the prospect of moving to simple majority voting in MSAs.

In most instances, the Government's support for simple-majority voting is predicated upon a tied proposal being taken as disagreed. However, they have set out circumstances where a Mayor may be granted a second, casting vote in such scenarios: this includes Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) and Local Transport Plans (LTP). This would disproportionately impact CAs with an even number of voting members, and could mean that a strategic proposal is determined with the majority of local authorities in disagreement.

We believe that there is a need for safeguards in decision-making.

To ensure that consensus is at the heart of English devolution, we are advocating for:

- The removal of the Mayor's casting vote in instances where decision-making is tied for SDSs and LTPs.
- The Bill to include a review of simple majority voting after 12 months, and additional reviews at five-year intervals thereafter, with a view to amending voting thresholds where needed.
- The Mayoral Capacity Fund to be at least doubled and secured as a long-term government commitment, to enable the effective delivery of overview and scrutiny functions.

- Where there is local support, and a need due to large population disparities between constituent councils, places to have the option to adopt weighted voting. In areas which are expected to undertake local government reorganisation, there would be review points to possibly phase out this arrangement as population disparities are addressed.
- In line with their constituent local authorities, it should be left to individual combined authorities to identify an appropriate level of quoracy for Overview and Scrutiny, rather than the current prescription of two-thirds in legislation.
- The language contained within existing and future devolution legislation should reflect political groups rather than political parties to recognise the vital role of independent politicians. This should reflect the language contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Joint decision-making in Greater London

It is positive to see included in the Bill guidance that before devolving or piloting a power to the GLA or a functional body, the government or the GLA will need to consult London borough councils, the City of London and the London Assembly, in line with existing arrangements for when the government designates a power to the Mayor.

However, London boroughs do not currently have a robust decision-making role over relevant funding and powers, in line with Strategic Authorities elsewhere in the country. A Combined Board model, as [proposed by London local authorities](#), would build on this important step by ensuring that councils have a formal decision-making role within the GLA. This would bring London in line with other devolution areas and enable better collaboration, better outcomes, and better value for money in public services across the region. The LGA supports amending the Bill to include this governance arrangement for the GLA and London boroughs.

More broadly, the legislation, as currently drafted, does not provide significant new powers or responsibilities for the Greater London Authority (GLA) nor London boroughs to evolve devolution in the capital. The LGA is keen to work with government to enable further devolution to the capital, in partnership with London Councils and our London members.

Clause 9: Appointment of commissioners by mayors

We recognise that the appointment of commissioners could add sector-specific value to

SAs' vision-setting.

Commissioners will fulfil a significant role in new strategic authorities and should be held to the same high standards as others in public life. There is potential that following LGR, in some SAs there could be fewer constituent councils than commissioners, given the mayor's power to appoint a commissioner for each area of competence. The LGA feels that as elected leaders of places, representing communities and residents, councils should be at the forefront of regional decision making and delivery. There must therefore be adequate safeguards surrounding the role of commissioners and their potential influence on the SA.

Commissioners should be explicitly in scope of anticipated reforms to the standards regime for local authorities, creating a common standard of conduct and behaviour for all those in public life in local and regional government. This will ensure appointed commissioners fulfil their role whilst providing accountability to the public, given they are unelected but will have a significant mandate for change in regions.

Whilst the LGA welcomes the safeguards set out in the Bill to enable removal of commissioners, the threshold by which the SA can agree this decision is too high. The LGA seeks to amend Schedule 3 paragraph 10, by which the SA overview and scrutiny committee and then board can recommend the termination of a commissioner's appointment, reducing the threshold for the latter from a two thirds majority to a simple majority. This decision should be in line with other decision-making principles included in the Bill for effective governance and scrutiny.

The LGA are concerned about the name 'commissioner' used in the legislation, as this has negative associations for councils to the role of government commissioners appointed to take over some or all of a council's functions when it is facing severe financial or operational difficulties. The LGA suggests a change in name to move away from the potential optics of an external expert entering an SA and usurping the role of constituent elected local leaders.

Clause 13: Levies

The LGA believes in genuine devolution, which means giving local areas the powers and tools to shape their own futures, including the ability to raise and control resources. The LGA calls for meaningful fiscal devolution, so that authorities have the tools and resources to match their responsibilities and respond to local challenges.

As a first step, the LGA supports introducing within the EDCB a clause empowering local areas to implement a tourist levy, should they choose, which enables councils to invest in the local services, infrastructure, and amenities that support the UK's valuable tourist economy.

As the LGA [has previously set out](#), tourism is a significant contributor to the UK Exchequer. Revenues are derived directly from tourist expenditure via taxes such as Air Passenger Duty and VAT, and indirectly from the effects of tourist expenditure on taxes such as corporation tax and income tax. However, these taxes are all collected centrally and the local area supporting the tourists does not receive any benefit from them, leaving local taxpayers shouldering the extra costs. While reducing VAT on services and accommodation may benefit individual businesses, the destination as a whole will not benefit from this; meaning that although the visitor may enjoy their accommodation, they would be more likely to return if additional investment had been made in the wider destination.

As leaders of place, councils play a crucial role in planning and developing their local visitor economies. Councils are responsible for maintaining the roads, beaches and waste collection, which all have higher demands placed on them by visitors, but receives no direct contribution from the visitor to cover these extra costs. A tourist levy could solve this problem, enabling destinations to be managed effectively and with the funding ring-fenced for activities that boost and strengthen the visitor economy, including extending the season.

With numerous cities across the world having a charge on tourist visitors, there are plenty of examples of how a tourist levy works in practice.

A levy would provide revenue to support sustainability and development of the local visitor economy by:

- Maintaining and enhancing public services impacted by tourism
- Investing in cultural, heritage and environmental assets
- Supporting local infrastructure and transport services.

This levy should be based on:

- Local discretion: Places should be empowered to introduce a tourism levy if appropriate for their area; and

- Revenue reinvestment: funds raised should be ringfenced to support local infrastructure, cultural services, and tourism management.

Part 2: Functions of strategic authorities and mayors

Clause 21: Power of mayors to convene meetings with local partners

The LGA supports a place-based approach to services, and the success of SAs relies on councils, communities and public services working together with Mayors in true partnership. Central government should be explicit that it expects public services to engage in place-based collaboration.

The [best examples of combined authority](#) working have been founded on a willingness to work collectively and an acceptance that conflict is natural and that safe spaces will be provided to air differences.

The LGA supports amending this clause to introduce a reciprocal duty to cooperate on all public service partners in an area with both the SA and local government, which pushes places to use the powers they already have to build local partnerships. This duty would embed best practice around cooperation which already exists at a neighbourhood, local and regional level, into statute. The duty to collaborate should be supported by an approach to regulation that includes a 'whole place' view of public services.

Clause 23: Regulation of provision of micromobility schemes

Councils, where there are shared bike schemes, would like to see greater powers to manage them, especially to deal with dangerous obstruction of the footway and street clutter.

Clause 27: Key route network roads

Preparation of a proposed designation of a key route network by CAs and CCAs should be a last resort, and its use should be as limited as possible. The focus should be on collaboration and engagement between strategic and highways authorities. The LGA would support inclusion of additional safeguards within the Bill to limit the use of this power

Clause 32: Development orders

Whilst we remain supportive of tools which may help to speed up housebuilding and

infrastructure delivery, omitting section 61DC(3) and (4) of the 1990 Act, which requires local planning authority consent before the preparation and consultation on a mayoral development order, removes an important layer of democratic and local accountability and knowledge. Local authorities remain best placed to make decisions related to development of their area.

The LGA supports retaining the requirement for local planning authority consent. This further underlines the importance of the LGA's suggested amendments to clause 6, which would preserve the important role of constituent councils in decision-making.

Clause 43: Health improvement and health inequalities duty

The bill rightly highlights the importance of mayors in promoting positive health outcomes and tackling health inequalities, through consideration of a wide range of determinants for health and broad scope for action. However, the LGA believes this duty is missing a crucial element: requiring the NHS to collaborate with SAs.

The LGA supports amending this clause to include a statutory duty on the NHS and health partners to collaborate with the SA in the exercise of this duty. Without this, it is hard to see how mayors will be able to command much attention from a vast health service operating on different boundaries. The LGA calls for join up across the system with reciprocal statutory duties to collaborate from integral partners in the health and wellbeing space.

Clause 46: Functions of police and crime commissioners

The LGA advocates for an amendment to this clause to follow the York and North Yorkshire Combination order which gives the option of appointing a Deputy Mayor of Fire or a Fire Committee to oversee decision-making. The North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel continues to operate as a statutory scrutiny body, with functions including:

- Reviewing and making recommendations on the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan.
- Scrutinising the Mayor's Annual Reports.
- Reviewing proposed precepts for policing and fire services, with a right of veto (requires two-thirds majority).
- Reviewing appointments of the Chief Constable, Chief Fire Officer, and Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime.

- Receiving notifications of suspensions or proposed dismissals of senior officers.
- Handling complaints related to the Deputy Mayor's functions

The LGA supports amending this clause to ensure clear, strong and appropriate scrutiny arrangements supporting the delivery of fire services with clear lines of accountability for senior officers in the service.

Clause 47: Mayor with PCC and fire and rescue authorities

The LGA seeks clarity in legislation regarding the governance of policing and fire and rescue services, particularly in areas moving toward greater devolution.

It is important that any changes to how mayors exercise these functions are based on local agreement, maintain clear lines of accountability and do not lead to fragmentation or disruption of existing partnership arrangements.

Where combined authorities are seeking to integrate fire and policing functions under a mayor, this should be underpinned by transparent and focussed governance arrangements, effective local scrutiny, clear lines of accountability for officers with appropriate and dedicated funding to support delivery and oversight.

The LGA will continue to support areas to ensure that any transfer of functions enhances local leadership and improves outcomes for residents, whilst recognising that governance models may vary depending on local context.

The LGA recognises that Mayors require flexibility in shaping their local governance arrangements. However, it is equally important that the public can see clear lines of accountability. There must also be parity between fire and police governance. Where Mayors hold both fire and police powers, they should have the option to appoint either separate deputies for each service or a joint deputy covering both. These roles should remain distinct from, and not be conflated with, or duplicated by, Public Safety Commissioners. In some areas, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Deputy Mayors already oversee both police and fire functions.

Clause 49: Requests by EMSAs for changes

The LGA supports this clause and welcomes the opportunity for EMSAs to seek further devolution to their areas. The LGA has called for government departments to adopt a '[devolution first](#)' principle, embedding a culture of thinking local across Whitehall. It is

therefore right that there is a duty on the Secretary of State to respond to proposals for further devolution and provide reasons for their decision.

The LGA calls for this clause to be broader than just requesting additional powers. We seek amendment to enable EMSAs to request additional areas of competence to be added to the framework for devolution set out in clause 2. This should be included in the guidance that the Secretary of State is required to produce on the formal request process.

New clause: Environment & climate change

The English Devolution White Paper (EDWP) set out commitments to empower SAs to act on climate change and the environment, including in helping deliver the Warm Homes Plan, the Local Power Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

The LGA seeks to expand the environment competency within the Bill to respond to national adaptation and mitigation ambitions and include further detail on empowerment for local action on climate change and the environment.

This is a priority for local government, and an area where local approaches can achieve significantly better outcomes for less cost, as has been demonstrated by Government-funded research.

The LGA seeks to transpose commitments set out in the English Devolution White Paper into the EDCEB on environment, energy generation and energy systems, and Warm Homes into the Bill with similar levels of detail as included for other competencies.

The LGA also seeks statutory duties and powers for local authorities, along with sufficient funding, and robust support to lead on climate action. Over the coming months the LGA will undertake further analysis on the duties and set out our next steps for developing detailed, evidenced, and costed proposals for this. The LGA would welcome the opportunity to work with government to shape these duties and powers.

Part 3: Other measures about local government and PCCs

Clause 57: Local authority governance and executives

Currently, 38 councils have chosen to operate a committee governance system, either through a referendum or council decision; these democratic decisions should not be disregarded. Further to this, all councils currently have the option to move to a committee

system if they and their communities feel it would be beneficial for local decision-making. This flexibility in local governance should be preserved for future authorities. We ask the Government to work with councils using the committee system going forward.

New clause: Local Government Pension Scheme: councillors and mayors

The lack of pension provision for councillors and mayors since 2014 is a financial barrier for working-age councillors, particularly if serving as a councillor means abstaining from other pensionable work. The Government has already announced its support for councillor and mayoral pensions; the LGA would support legislation to bring this into change forwards as soon as possible.

New clause: Councillor home addresses

Under existing legislation, councils must maintain two registers that include councillors' home addresses. Under Clause 100G of the Local Government Act 1972, councils are required to maintain a register of the names and addresses of members and coopted members on council committees and subcommittees. This list must be available for the public to inspect. Under Clause 29 of the Localism Act 2011, monitoring officers must maintain a register of members' interests, including pecuniary interests, which will usually include home addresses of members and their spouses within the local authority area. This register must be available for the public to inspect and published on the website. There is provision for councillors' home addresses to be withheld from the public register of interests as a sensitive interest; however, the legislation does not provide for councillors to proactively withhold their address.

The Government has committed to removing the requirement for members' home addresses to be published. The LGA would support amendments to the EDCEB to address this issue for multiple practical, safety and wellbeing reasons. This could be achieved relatively easily through amendments to the EDCE Bill to require councils not to publish the home address of members or those whom they live with in a public register.

New clause: Remote attendance at council meetings

Under the Local Government Act 1972, relevant statutory meetings must be held in person, and councillors cannot formally attend or vote if they attend remotely. The LGA has long called for councils to be able to decide for themselves whether to allow remote attendance and welcomed the Government's announcement that councils will be given

this flexibility. These reforms should be incorporated into the EDCE Bill to ensure that new authorities are established with this option available from the outset. The LGA would support amendments to bring this change into effect as soon as possible.

Part 4: Local Audit

Clause 66: Audit committees

Local authorities will already have a committee whose functions include those of an audit committee. The proposed legislation formalises this and aligns the requirements and functions of councils with those already in place for Combined Authorities.

If independent members are to be mandated, this needs to be handled carefully, and the LGA seeks clarity through the legislation or statutory guidance on what constitutes “independent”, the appropriate skill requirements, remuneration levels and a solution for those authorities who are unable to recruit suitable local capacity, potentially through a national pool.

Part 5: Business tenancies: prohibited terms relating to rent

Clause 71: Rent reviews and “put options”: prohibited terms

The current and future viability of high streets and town centres is a priority for almost all councils. For most areas, the solutions lie in creating the conditions for a strong local economy and having the right size and blend of businesses, private and public services and residential that will create footfall to maintain vibrancy and help sustain the high street as an important economic and social asset. It is important that the commercial rental market supports this.

However, whilst a ban on upward-only rent reviews for new leases may appear to help keep rents down and therefore more attractive to businesses; there is concern with potentially unintended consequences of the long-term viability and attractiveness to investors and developers. This includes for councils, many of which are significant landlords in their high streets. It is helpful that existing leases, including those with council landlords, will continue to operate under their existing terms, including any rent review clauses.

We therefore call on the Government, before introducing any new legislation, to consult widely and collect evidence on:

- What are the determinants of empty high street shops and the extent that upwards only rent reviews are a significant factor; and
- The impact that a ban on such reviews may have on future viability and attractiveness for investors.

October 2025

Local Government Association (LGA)

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Clauses 1-7

About this submission

This submission is intended to support the Public Bill Committee's discussions on the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. It highlights the legislative changes which the LGA would wish to see to Clauses 1-7 of the Bill. We have provided further detail on each of these changes in our written evidence submission to the Committee.

The LGA will be seeking amendments to this draft legislation to ensure it delivers for every tier of local government. If there is a clause or provision within this bill that you would like to work with the LGA to draft an appropriate amendment to, please get in touch and we can work with your team to move this forward.

Amendments sought

Clause	Amendment sought
Clause 2: Areas of Competence	Introduce a new mayoral competency for: • Culture (arts, heritage, libraries) • Tourism • Creative industries (as defined in the Industrial Strategy)

Clause 4: Combined Authorities and CCAs – Establishment, Expansion and Functions Paragraph 14 – Secretary of State Powers	Amendments Sought: 1. Introduce a statutory test for establishing or expanding Strategic Authorities (SAs), based on: ○ Scale ○ Economies ○ Identity ○ Contiguity ○ No devolution islands ○ Delivery capacity ○ Alignment with public sector boundaries 2. Define “local identity” in legislation, with criteria including: ○ Historical/cultural coherence ○ Civic participation ○ Geographic recognisability ○ Governance alignment with identity 3. Parliamentary Oversight: ○ Require a geography assessment statement from the Secretary of State. ○ Subject proposals to affirmative resolution procedure. ○ Introduce a sunset clause on these powers, with parliamentary approval required for extensions.
Clause 4: Combined Authorities and CCAs – Establishment, Expansion and Functions	Insert a new paragraph establishing a duty on Mayors and Strategic Authorities to engage and co-produce:

Statutory Role for Councils	○ Plans ○ Schemes ○ Strategies (e.g. Local Growth Plans, micromobility schemes)
Clause 6: Decision-Making and Validity of Proceedings Local Safeguards to Decision-Making	Amendments Sought: 1. Remove Mayor's casting vote for tied decisions on: ○ Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) ○ Local Transport Plans (LTP) 2. Introduce statutory review of simple majority voting: ○ After 12 months ○ Every 5 years thereafter 3. Enable weighted voting where: ○ Supported locally ○ Needed due to population disparities 4. Allow combined authorities to set their own quorum for Overview and Scrutiny (currently prescribed at two-thirds). 5. Update legislative language to refer to political groups rather than political parties, in line with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
Clause 6: Decision-Making and Validity of Proceedings Joint Decision-Making in Greater London	Amend the Bill to establish a Combined Board model for the GLA and London boroughs, giving boroughs a formal decision-making role.

