

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK (CCN) CONFERENCE – NOVEMBER 2021****Purpose of the Report**

1. To report to Committee the key messages from the County Councils Network (CCN) conference, which took place in Buckinghamshire from 21 - 23 November 2021.

Information**Background**

2. Following Policy Committee approval on 2nd September 2021, the Leader, Deputy Leader and Leader of the Labour Group attended the annual CCN conference, along with the Chief Executive.
3. The conference is organised by the CCN, which is a cross-party special interest group of the Local Government Association (LGA), representing England's county local authorities. The CCN acts as the voice for county authorities across Westminster, to key influencers, and within the LGA and local government sector.
4. The theme for the 2021 conference was leading recovery and delivering renewal. Leaders of England's largest councils gathered to ask key Government Ministers in attendance questions regarding key national policy agendas including, levelling up and county deals, the future of Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care Reform, planning communities and net zero.
5. Conference attendees heard from key figures including the Secretary of State for Levelling-Up, Housing, and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Minister of State for Care, Gillian Keegan MP, Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, Josh MacAlister and a cross party selection of MPs.

Overview of the Conference**Councillor Tim Oliver, Chairman of the CCN**

6. The conference was opened by Councillor Tim Oliver, Chairman of the CCN, who summarised the focus of the conference in his opening remarks. An overview of the key points raised by Councillor Oliver is provided in points 7 and 8 below.
7. Through the challenges of the pandemic, the vital role Local Government in supporting their local communities and economies has been clear for all to see. Member Councils should be proud of their herculean humanitarian effort, but the pandemic is not over and there remains

much to do to protect the vulnerable. The focus now must also be on the future, and the essential place-based leadership that counties will offer through recovery and in delivery of the Government's levelling up agenda to "build back better".

8. CCN's recent successes and priorities as an influencing voice include:

- A better-than-expected Spending Review outcome; an additional £4.8 billion in Government grant and a potential 3-year settlement. CCN advocacy has continued to ensure that the Local Government Settlement distributes funding in a fair manner that acknowledges the severe pressures being experienced by frontline upper tier services. Campaigning for fairer funding will continue, highlighting the impact of reduced Government grants on local taxpayers.
- A long-term solution to Adult Social Care, building on the recently announced reforms. CCN will be vocal with regards to the additional pressures that the move to a fair price of care and the additional responsibilities that have been announced will place on front line services and will hold Government to account on funding. Right now, there is a need for pooled funding with the NHS to speed up discharges from hospital and the CCN are supporting intensive discussions with Government and health partners.
- Sustainable Children's services; analysis commissioned by the CCN indicates that without systemic changes the number of children in the care system across the country is likely to rise by up to 36% by 2025. An optimised service delivery model is required to improve outcomes and deliver sustainable services, including reducing the number of children in long term residential care by investing in preventative services.
- The importance of Counties as place-based leaders in building strong economic foundations, delivering the levelling up agenda, addressing health inequalities and creating the green society of the future. Delivery of devolution through County Deals at pace will be central to this and CCN have commissioned support to contribute to the developing framework for deals.

Secretary of State for Levelling-Up, Housing, and Communities

9. Rt Honourable Michael Gove MP joined the conference remotely and answered questions from attendees on a variety of topics, summarised as follows:

- Devolution
- Local Government structures
- Planning reform
- Challenges faced by social care services
- Local economies
- Transport.

Other Topics

10. The other sessions at the Conference were as follows:

- The Future of Children's Social Care
- Adult Social Care Reform
- Planning Communities
- The Role of Counties in Delivering net Zero
- Views from Liberal Democrats, Labour and the LGA
- Local Government Finance
- Where Next for Levelling Up

- Counties' Role in Leading Recovery and Delivering Renewal
- Keynote speech from the Minister of State for Care, Gillian Keegan MP.

Other Options Considered

11. None.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. To feedback to Committee on the key messages from the CCN conference.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

14. The cost of attending the conference was set out in the report to Policy Committee on 2 September 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That Members consider the contents of this report and note that further details of the speeches and presentations can be found on the CCN website.

Councillor Ben Bradley MP
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Anthony May, Chief Executive,
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Constitutional Comments (ELP 17/12/21)

15. The committee has authority to consider the matters set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SES 14/12/2021)

16. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

17. The cost of attending the conference was set out in the report to Policy Committee on 2 September 2021.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[CCN Network Annual Conference 2021 - Policy Committee Report - 2 September 2021](#)

[Watch all the sessions from CCN Conference 2021 – County Councils Network.](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All