



Policy Digest

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Policy News

Support for post-Brexit future

A package of measures to support the next generation, promote economic growth, and prepare for a post-Brexit future, were [announced](#) by the Chancellor at the Conservative Party Conference. These include:

- **National Living Wage**

The Chancellor pledged that the National Living Wage will be increased, reaching two-thirds of median earnings within five years, provided economic conditions allow.

He also pledged to change the National Living Wage – currently for people over the ages of 25 – so that it applies to those aged 23 and over from 2021, and to those aged 21 and over within five years.

- **Youth Investment Fund**

The Chancellor announced a new £500m Youth Investment Fund. This investment will help build 60 new youth centres across the country, refurbish around 360 existing youth facilities, and provide over 100 mobile facilities for harder to reach areas.

The fund will also support the provision and coordination of high-quality services for young people, and an investment in the youth workforce.

- **Gigabit Broadband**

To ensure that no part of the country is left without next-generation broadband, the Chancellor pledged £5bn to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach 20% of the country.

Summary

Key Announcements

- Support for post-Brexit future.
- Queen's Speech 2019.
- New National Design Guide.
- National Bus Strategy.
- Council powers to fine drivers.

Consultations

- Dedicated Schools Grant.
- Financial Reporting and External Audit.
- Introduction of green number plates.

- **English Devolution**

To help drive local growth, the Chancellor announced that the government would introduce an English Devolution White Paper, which would set out how further powers and funding would be devolved across England.

- **Post-Brexit Funding**

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal and should the EU cease to fund UK organisations after Brexit, the government has provided a funding guarantee to organisations in receipt of certain EU programme funding (such as the European Regional Development Fund and Horizon 2020).

Queen's Speech 2019

On 14 October, the Government announced a series of legislative bills at the State Opening of Parliament. The Council has prepared a [briefing](#) on these announcements, which include plans to reform adult social care, tougher sentences for violent offenders, legal targets for cutting plastic pollution, and the delayed Domestic Abuse Bill.

New National Design Guide issued to councils

The Government has issued a new [National Design Guide](#), setting out ten principles of good building to inform local authority planning decisions. The guide urges councils to ensure new houses and developments inspire 'a sense of delight,' and states that more homes must not come at the expense of 'quality and design'.

Among the recommendations in the guide are for tree-lined avenues, respect for local history, clear streets and a mix of housing types. Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick says the Government's housing policy is 'not just about the quantity of new homes but the quality too'.

National bus strategy

A new Government [bus strategy](#), backed with an initial £220m, will see local authorities pilot schemes to boost electric take-up and low fares, as well as more London-style franchising powers.

Ministers promised that a 'long-term funding package will be announced as part of the 2020 spending review'. This would include plans to 'support local authorities, which want to pursue London-style bus systems in their areas'.

Councils could get new powers to fine drivers

Councils in England could be given powers to [penalise motorists](#) for offences such as stopping in yellow box junctions and making illegal turns. The Government is considering devolving powers to councils outside London to crack down on a series of traffic infringements, as part of new measures to cut congestion levels.

Consultations

Revised arrangements for the Dedicated Schools Grant

The Department for Education is consulting on changing the conditions of grant and regulations applying to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), to clarify that the DSG is a ring-fenced specific grant separate from the general funding of local authorities.

It also clarifies that any deficit an authority may have on its DSG account is expected to be carried forward, and does not require to be covered by the authority's general reserves. The Government will then make a decision on the proposed changes, in time to inform the setting of local authorities' budgets for the financial year 2020-21.

The [consultation](#) closes on 15 November 2019.

Review of local authority financial reporting and external audit

An independent review is seeking views on the quality of local authority financial reporting and external audit. The call invites views, information and evidence on, in particular:

- definitions of audit and its users
- the expectation gap
- audit and wider assurance
- the governance framework
- audit product and quality
- auditor reporting
- how local authorities respond to audit findings
- the financial reporting framework.

The [consultation](#) closes on 22 November 2019.

Introduction of green number plates

The Department for Transport has launched a consultation on introducing green number plates for zero emission cars.

The initiative aims to raise awareness of the increasing number of zero tailpipe emission vehicles on UK roads, help their drivers to benefit more easily from local incentives like free or cheaper parking and encourage greater uptake of new vehicle technology.

Through green number plates, local authorities would have a visual identifier should they wish to introduce incentives to promote the use of zero emission vehicles, such as allowing these drivers to use bus lanes and pay less for parking.

The [consultation](#) closes on 14 January 2020.