

CCN

COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK



COUNTIES

LEADING **RECOVERY**

DELIVERING **RENEWAL**

**Business Plan & Work
Programme 2021/22**

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How to engage with CCN

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County Councils Network



County Councils Network

Email the team

countycouncilsnetwork@local.gov.uk

Visit the website

www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk



COUNTIES

LEADING **RECOVERY**
DELIVERING **RENEWAL**



Introduction

Your Network

The County Councils Network (CCN) is the largest grouping of upper-tier authorities in England, with our councils covering 46% of England's population and 86% of its landmass.

CCN is your dedicated special interest group, articulating the priorities and policy issues that matter most to you – our 36 councils. We provide your gateway to Whitehall and Parliament, and speak on your behalf in the national media. We provide a platform for our councils to share common challenges and best practice, while representing your unique interests within the LGA.

What makes CCN the natural home for county and unitary authorities of significant size and scale, and what binds our network together, is not only the services our councils provide, but the uniqueness of the places our councillors represent.

CCN is the only national voice for the county and largest unitary authorities in England, who represent the cities, towns, rural, and coastal communities that make up our areas, providing a significant counterbalance to the organisations representing London and metropolitan areas.

In light of the Coronavirus pandemic the need for a powerful voice for county and unitary authorities has never been more important. CCN has spoken with one voice with the sector on the critical role councils have played, but also represented you independently on the unique issues facing the residents and businesses you serve.

Through this support, we have witnessed an unprecedented level of direct engagement with our member councils to understand their response to the crisis and help shape the work of our organisation.

This Business Plan demonstrates how our network has come together at a time of national emergency like never before, continuing to progress and deliver our work programme and major projects, alongside proactive advocacy and support to help our members meet the unparalleled challenges of the past 12 months.

Looking ahead, the impact on the pandemic on our member councils, their communities, and CCN, has shaped our 2021/22 Work Programme. While CCN retains our six core priorities, our new overarching campaign ***Counties: Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal*** recognises that the pandemic has fundamentally changed the economy and society.

CCN has closely examined the national policy landscape and the emerging legacy of the pandemic, adapting a programme of activity across our priorities so it reflects these developments and is fit-for-purpose to deliver better outcomes for our member councils and the communities they serve.

Focusing on our priorities and new overarching campaign ***Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal***, we will build on our tried and tested approach to national advocacy and our successes to date.

Crucially, learning from our new ways of working and enhanced engagement with members, this document shows how CCN will do even more to support our councils at a crucial time in the nation's history.

Your Network

Vision, Aims & Objectives

Vision

To ensure CCN is an influential and respected network, advocating innovative policy solutions on the challenges facing local government and the wider public sector.

Aim

To ensure counties have the powers and resources to meet the needs and aspirations of their residents on issues of particular importance to our councils and their communities.



Corporate objectives

- Influence public policy at national level**
Act as the voice for county and unitary councils, advocating and representing members' views within the LGA, across Whitehall and to key influencers.
- Produce original research & innovative policy solutions**
Produce or commission original research to support the development and advocacy of innovative policy solutions, addressing the unique demographic, financial and geographical challenges facing counties and their residents.
- Enhance the profile of CCN**
Continue to raise the profile of CCN, lead members and officers through development of strong, impactful and consistent external and internal communications alongside a targeted public affairs strategy.
- Support member councils & share best practice**
Act as a gateway to Whitehall for member councils. Share intelligence and best practice to support member councils and public sector partners to continue to be the most effective and efficient organisations in the public sector.
- Corporate resilience**
Identify strategic risks and set out organisational and financial strategies to ensure the network is resilient and sustainable over the short, medium and long term.

Campaigns & Policy

What CCN has delivered

In March 2020, CCN set out an ambitious programme of advocacy to influence the direction of what was then the new Government. At the time, no one could have predicted the events of the past 12 months and the unprecedented challenges created by the Coronavirus pandemic for every aspect of daily life.

Just as our member councils transformed how they worked and reprioritised their efforts over night, CCN needed to switch to remote working, adapt our planned work programme, and, crucially, undertake additional unplanned support to our member councils in response to the pandemic.

Throughout the past year we have prioritised this support, providing a gateway for members to raise issues directly with Ministers and Officials, while influencing the local and national response and disseminating important information.

Key to this has been establishment of weekly virtual meetings for CCN Council Leaders and the Association of County Chief Executives (ACCE), creating a forum to share common challenges and help direct specific county advocacy on key issues. Building on this engagement, CCN were involved in high-level early discussions with Government Ministers and Officials on critical aspects of the Covid-19 response, such as the development of the shielding arrangements.

As the pandemic progressed, we sought to use our close working relationships with Ministers and Officials to shape the national and local response, including infection control plans, mass testing and outbreak management plans. We have proactively supported our member councils with early analysis of Covid-19 data, represented their views on service resumption following lockdowns and on developments such as the tiering system.

The additional financial pressures created by Covid-19 have been a key feature of CCN's dedicated pandemic advocacy. In recent years, our network has become one of the most authoritative voices on local government finance and this has enabled CCN, supported by new in-depth research and strong collaboration with the Society of County Treasurers (SCT), to successfully lobby on this critical issue.

Our research with Grant Thornton, published in June, was the first major report exploring the impact of Covid-19 on councils' budgets. Our calls for the introduction of an income guarantee put forward a practical and constructive solution to prevent unsustainable losses in local taxes, while our Spending Review Submission and Autumn Budget Survey demonstrated the difficult choices facing our member councils.

This advocacy, combined with our direct engagement with Ministers and the Treasury, contributed to the Government providing £4.6bn in direct government support for councils. Alongside this other key funding streams were secured, including adopting our recommendation for an income guarantee and financial support to care providers, local track and trace and outbreak management.



Campaigns & Policy

What CCN has delivered

Throughout the past year, CCN has sought to articulate the critical role our member councils were playing in responding to Coronavirus. Two best practice documents, including our most recent report *Road to Recovery: How counties are leading efforts to respond and rebuild*, vividly demonstrated the varied role our member councils have played. It showed how locally-led solutions have been most effective in tackling the virus and supporting the recovery.

It was on this theme of economic recovery that CCN were able to combine advocacy on the pandemic with delivering our core work programme priorities. As infection rates subsided over the summer, a short resumption of the domestic policy agenda became possible.

CCN responded by releasing a second major report with Grant Thornton exploring the impact of the national lockdown on county economies and the crucial role of county and unitary authorities in driving a *Place-Based Recovery*. CCN has engaged extensively with the government's housing and planning reforms, including putting forward a solution that would establish a stronger approach to strategic planning across the country through a report with planning-expert Catriona Riddell.

More widely, with the Government announcing their intentions to bring forward the long-trailed Devolution & Economic Recovery White Paper, CCN released independent analysis by Henham Strategy and PriceWaterHouseCoopers (PwC) exploring the case for devolution to county areas and a comprehensive evidence-base to inform local government reorganisation discussions.

One undoubted consequence of the pandemic has been its impact on adult social care. In September we launched a major programme of advocacy to influence long-promised reforms under the banner of our campaign #KeepCareLocal.

Beginning with our think piece report *The Other Side of the Coin*, CCN set out the themes we believed should be at the heart of the adult social care system. This was followed by an extensive project with Newton, culminating in February with the publication of *The Future of Adult Social Care: Optimised Local Delivery*. This report provided an evidence-based blueprint for reform to engage government over the coming months.

Elsewhere, CCN continued to deliver on our advocacy priorities. Major reports were published on children's services and early years funding, childcare markets and retirement communities. Moreover, our report *Reversing the Decline of County Buses* directly influenced the recent National Bus Strategy; ensuring that the strategy did not prioritise cities at the expense of other areas.

All these reports and projects have been accompanied by our core work programme activity and responding to key consultations and announcements. The move to remote working has also enabled us to engage member councils like never before through our dedicated officer groups and support for ACCE: sharing best practice, shaping the policy development of CCN, and gaining direct access to decision makers in Westminster and Whitehall.

Although the domestic policy agenda has been largely paused, our campaigns and policy development over the past 12 months have strengthened our position as leading contributors to the debate on the future of local government policy. In the process, it has further enhanced the profile of our work and our connections across Whitehall.

Most importantly, our support for councils through the pandemic has deepened collaboration with our member councils at all levels, providing even firmer foundations for the network's future policy development and advocacy.



CCN's Support for Members

At a glance



30

.....publications, consultation responses and submissions to Government in 2020/21

Policy Development & Research

CCN produces research and responds to Government consultations, putting forward a strong evidence base to address the challenges and opportunities for counties. This year we produced 15 publications across a wider range of policy areas; more than ever before.

Media & Communications

With our growing media profile, CCN is the voice for counties in the national press and on prime-time TV and radio, alongside a constant presence in the trade press and journals. CCN has had our most successful year to date, including 143 national media hits across all outlets, up 40% year-on-year.

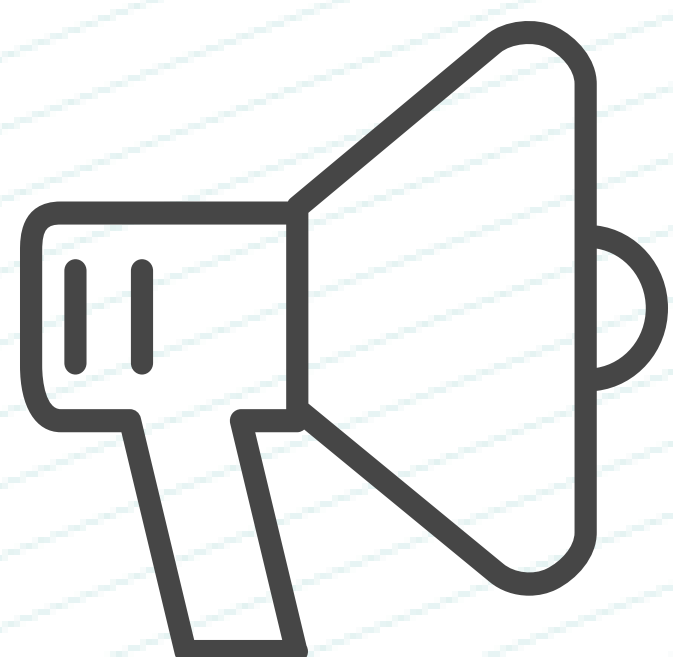


1,297

**.....media stories & articles
a 83% annual increase**

Public Affairs

Through our public affairs support CCN is the gateway to Whitehall and Parliament for member councils, while building strong relationships with stakeholders across the local government, public and private sectors. Despite the impact of the pandemic, we continued to provide evidence to committees and contribute to national events.



6

....appearances at Select Committees & virtual national events



5

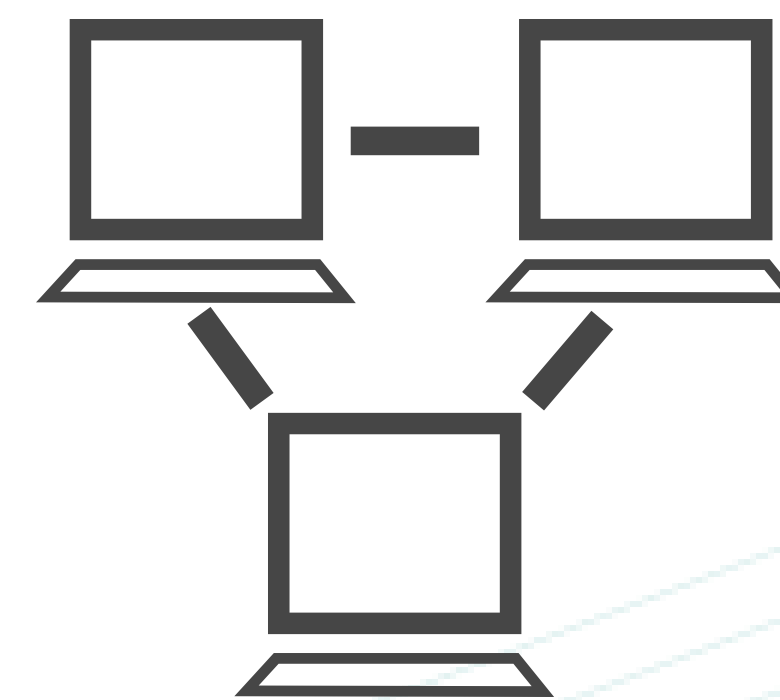
**.....online set-piece events
on a range of policy
subjects.**

Events & Conference

As a result of the pandemic we have delivered more online events, providing the opportunity to profile our major projects, engage Ministers and other high-profile speakers on key policy issues. Looking ahead, our Annual Conference 2021 will be one of the first post-pandemic local government events.

Meetings & Advisory

The use of improved video-conferencing technology has dramatically increased our weekly contact with member councils through regular Leaders & Chief Executives virtual meetings. CCN is also providing more bespoke expert advice and intelligence gathering for individual councils across a range of policy areas.



56

**.....virtual meetings for
Leaders, CCN Council and
Chief Executives**



17

**.....dedicated officer group
meetings across
corporate policy, adults &
children's.**

ACCE & Officer Groups

Alongside our dedicated support to the Association of County Chief Executives, CCN has four policy specific officer groups, providing senior officers in our member councils access to policy makers and national influencers. Moving these meetings online has dramatically increased the level of attendance and engagement.

Campaigns & Policy

Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal

As we emerge from the pandemic with the roll out of mass vaccinations, the activity undertaken by CCN during the past 12 months places our network in a strong position to influence a resumption of the domestic policy agenda.

The recent Budget showed that much of the Government's core policy programme will remain broadly in line with the Conservative Manifesto, including the 'levelling up' agenda, publishing social care proposals, progressing planning reforms and delivering a multi-year Spending Review. There will be unrelenting focus on economic recovery, levelling up and 'building back better', alongside the anticipated re-emergence of the devolution agenda.

As such, the priorities we set out in our last business plan remain as relevant today as they were a year ago. CCN will therefore retain our six core priorities and work-streams from the 2020/21 Business Plan & Work Programme, updated where necessary to reflect developments.

However, our advocacy will need to consider how Covid-19 has changed the way we live, work and think. Therefore, at the core of our work this year will be a new campaign narrative **Counties: Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal**.

This will recognise that local government will need to continue to adapt to reflect the fundamental changes brought about by the pandemic, building on some of the positive changes, as well as increasing resilience, agility and the skills required to be able to overcome economic and social challenges exacerbated by Coronavirus.

The extraordinary circumstances of 2020 have forced us all to rethink the role of public services, the skills and support our workforce needs and the resources needed to deliver for our communities.

Maintaining the status quo is not an option and place leadership will be critical. Local government has been playing an essential system leadership role but requires the right resources and powers to properly fulfil this role.

A key pillar of this work will be our new research project with PwC, *The Future of Local Government* – a consideration of the current and future environment councils operate in, and the role of councils over the next decade.



Campaigns & Policy

Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal

The *Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal* campaign will crosscut all our priorities and work-streams, while drawing on well-established campaigns and policy positions.

CCN's ambitious work programme outlines our major projects and core policy development activity across our six priorities, underpinned by an increased commissioning budget to draw on external expertise and provide weight to our arguments. CCN will expand our portfolio of research and policy development across unitary services and release a new report focused exclusively on this expanding cohort of members.

We will continue to build a positive narrative around *Unleashing the Potential of Counties* through the levelling up agenda, Community Renewal Fund, National Buses Strategy and Government's new plan for growth, *Build Back Better*, launched at the Budget.

Getting economies back on their feet will require county and unitary authorities to use their size, scale and expertise to articulate a vision for how they will lead the recovery and deliver renewal in response to dramatic changes in local economies, working with the private sector to reshape and reform as they recover.

Our member councils are the vital place leaders to drive the changes required through investment, influence and action at scale, while also enabling the retraining and upskilling of the workforce to adapt to fundamental changes in the labour market, and investing in sustainable transport and improving connectivity.

The vital role of county and unitary authorities in delivering large-scale projects and advocating a return to strategic planning will be essential to our work on creating communities. But equally important will be demonstrating the tailored support our member councils can provide right down to local neighbourhoods and individual households to help ease the burden felt by those suffering the worst socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

This work on growth and communities will be underpinned by extensive advocacy to influence the Devolution & Economic Recovery White Paper, while continuing to support our member councils directly with devolution and local government reorganisation proposals.

CCN's campaign for *A Fairer Future for Counties* will continue to play an important role in our advocacy, highlighting the unique financial challenges counties face and the imperative for the Government to finally complete and implement the Fair Funding Review.

Critically, this year will finally see the Government undertake a comprehensive Spending Review and expect proposals for the long-term reform of social care services to be published.

CCN will build on our research over the past 12 months and collaborate with the wider sector to make the case for increased resources for all councils, with a particular focus on children's social care and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities. We will also engage extensively with wider reforms to the local government finance system, including the fundamental review of business rates and New Homes Bonus.

Our #KeepCareLocal campaign will build on the launch of our report with Newton, alongside further 'deep dives' with member councils to evidence the effectiveness of our optimised local delivery model; engaging Government as they develop their adult social care proposals and implement recent proposals for health reform. We will also commission a major new project to influence the recently announced independent review of children's services.

And, as we seek to build back better and greener, dedicated projects and advocacy will be undertaken on climate change, while recognising the implications for environmental sustainability across all our priorities. This will learn the lessons of the pandemic and the unique challenge of carbon net zero ambitions, placing sustainability and renewal at the centre of our member councils' agenda moving forward..

Read more on our work programme further on in this document.

Public Affairs

CCN's approach

CCN's public affairs strategy over the past few years has been to proactively establish alliances and networks with key influencers across Parliament, Whitehall, the LGA and national stakeholders, promoting the work of CCN and our member councils in a positive, solution-based manner.

Over the past twelve months Covid-19 has suspended much of the normal political routine, with delays to key milestones such as local elections, reshuffles, a three-year Spending Review, and publication of key white papers and policy programmes.

Despite this, CCN gained more exposure than ever across Whitehall and Parliament – albeit virtually – securing high-profile meetings with Ministers and Officials to ensure that members concerns on all aspects of the part that councils have played on the national response to Covid-19 were recognised and taken into account.

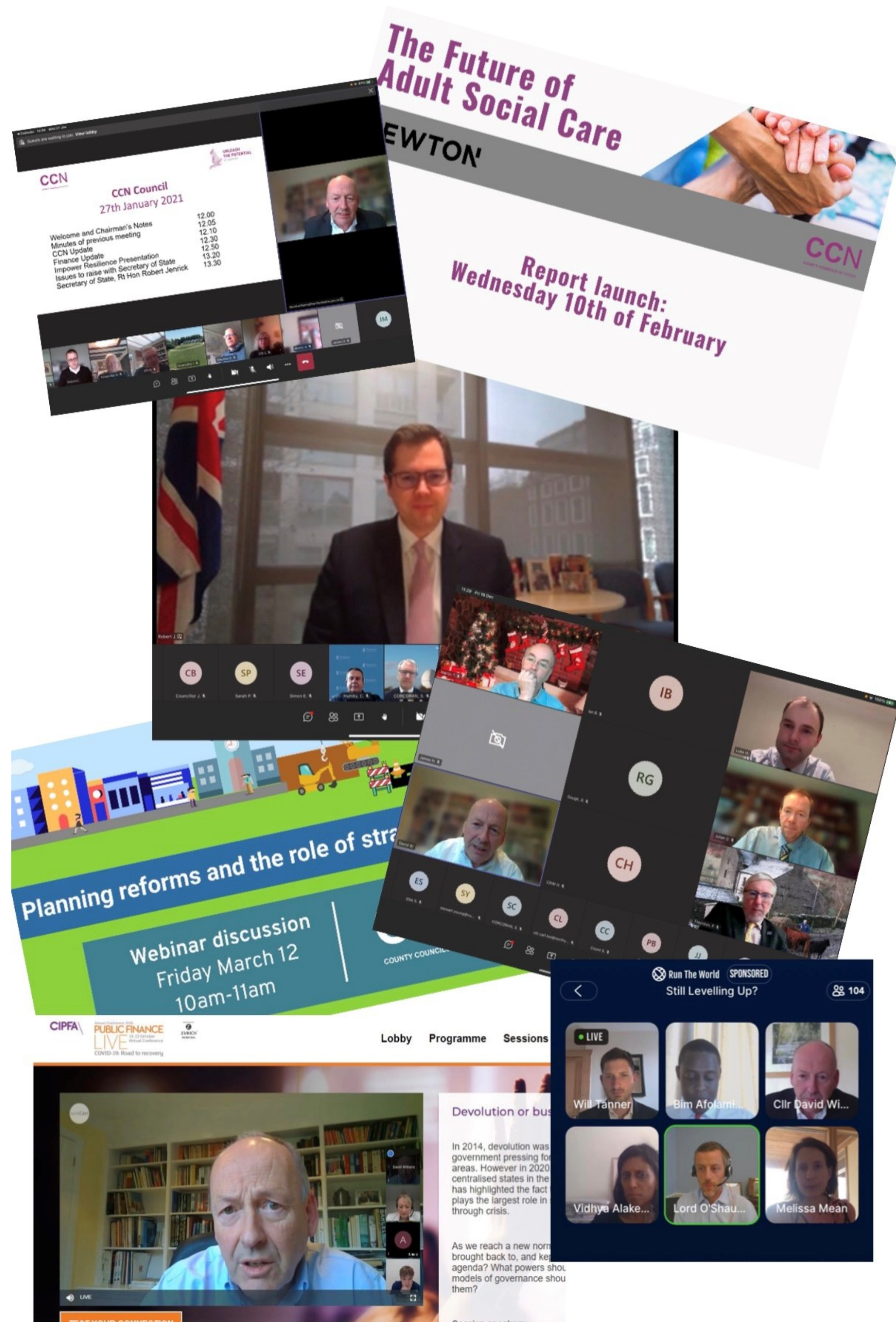
CCN works to influence ministers through weekly meetings between the Chairman and MHCLG Ministers, with regular opportunities to engage Ministers from other Departments through our programme of member meetings. Officers also meet regularly with Special Advisors and Civil Servants to ensure that CCN concerns and research are understood across Whitehall.

In Parliament, we aim to utilise our secretariat support for the County All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and strong links between CCN council leaders and parliamentarians to build the profile of CCN's work and campaigns. CCN supported a number of APPG meetings during the year and in November we published the culmination of our APPG inquiry into rural buses with a major report *Reversing the Decline of County Buses*.

CCN has worked to use this group to build a cohort of MPs that can be briefed on issues affecting counties ahead of parliamentary debates, including an increased number of meetings with individual parliamentarians and numerous mentions of our advocacy in Parliament. CCN has also launched a regular newsletter, aimed at highlighting the key issues affecting CCN members and showcasing the good work undertaken by members.

CCN has responded to a number of calls for evidence issued by select committees, supporting the CCN Chairman when he gave oral evidence to the Commons Housing, Communities & Local Government and Public Administration & Constitutional Affairs Select Committees, and the House of Lords Public Services Committee. We have also spoken at a number high-profile on-line events, including CIPFA conference.

Alongside work with Ministers, MPs and peers to progress the policy aims of the network, CCN is enhancing our messaging by increasing our links with key national stakeholders, private sector partners, think tanks and other policy networks. Remote working has enabled CCN to deliver more events online, covering economic recovery and devolution, the future of adult social care, encouraging more retirement housing, and the future of strategic planning.



Public Affairs

CCN's objectives

Looking ahead, our public affairs strategy will take advantage of the anticipated renewed national political focus on a wide range of issues to increase our Whitehall and Parliamentary profile.

CCN will seek to further increase our members engagement with Secretaries of States and senior Ministers through attendance at our Council meetings, Leaders' Calls, and individual meetings with our Executive Committee Members and Spokespersons.

Officers will continue their focus on building connections and relationships with senior civil servants and special advisors in No.10, the Treasury and key departments.

We will look to consolidate and build upon our work with parliamentarians, creating a strong advocacy base for CCN policy, arranging individual meetings, briefing events, and targeted written briefings on CCN research ahead of parliamentary debates.

With member councils key to our engagement with MPs and Lords, we will provide opportunities for councillors to attend events with parliamentarians and Ministers.

This year we will undertake a review of the operation of our County APPG, exploring options for external support to help raise its profile and the reach.



CCN's Parliamentary activity will touch on all six of our priorities, but with specific focus on the Fair Funding Review, Spending Review and the economic recovery. We will work to ensure that MPs are aware of the financial challenges facing county authorities, but also outline a positive narrative of our member councils in place-based growth and public service reform.

With MPs an important stakeholder on devolution and local government reorganisation proposals, we will provide direct support to our member councils in securing backing for their local ambitions.

More widely, we will look to build links across the local government sector, think tanks and other stakeholders to ensure that CCN speaks alongside key policy makers. We will build on the expertise we have built up to provide virtual events throughout the year, supporting publication of reports and research and to increase the profile of CCN and its members.

With the recent roadmap out of lockdown indicating the end of restrictions by early summer, CCN now fully anticipate the return of the CCN Annual Conference in November. With Coronavirus entirely cancelling in-person events until at least June this year, our Annual Conference is likely to be the most high-profile local government event in 2021.

With an even more enhanced profile for our annual gathering, we will ensure a timely agenda to engage on the most pressing issues presented by the resumption of the domestic agenda and legacy of the pandemic. Most importantly, it will see a return of the informal networking which is such an important and valued feature of the event.



Media & Communications

CCN's approach

CCN's media and communications is aimed at positioning the network as the prime voice of county areas in the national, local, and trade news.

The impact of the pandemic has meant cut through for local government stories has been especially difficult. However, our well-established profile and approach to landing targeted and impactful stories has meant that, despite a busy news agenda, we have had our most successful year of coverage.

The network aimed to be the first port of call for journalists on rural and county issues, particularly those directly impacting local authorities. The onset of Coronavirus saw a huge increase in requests for information from journalists; from PPE, to household waste recycling centres, to losses in council tax income.

The virus changed CCN's media plans in the first months of the pandemic, from proactive and focused campaigns, to more immediate and reactive communications.

CCN's communications also changed to more public service messaging. In the week after the first lockdown in March was announced, the network produced a round-up of all the services affected by closures with a 'bear with us' message: this was featured on the 6pm BBC News. Further public-facing messaging, such as encouraging residents to avoid crowded county beauty spots was also featured on BBC's daytime news and on ITV News.

In recognition that member councils may need a database of information, the CCN communications team put together a Coronavirus section of the website in just a few days, designed to bring together all the latest relevant government guidance, CCN's communications, and signposting for further help.

With further lockdowns having less of a visible impact on council services, the remainder of the year saw CCN return to more usual communications, with targeted media campaigns on big-ticket publications.

As a result of the strong relationships CCN has built up with journalists over the years, and our targeted media approach, the period from the start of 2020 to the end of this February resulted in 1,297 media stories in the press, an 83% increase. In that timeframe, CCN has secured or been included in 134 national media stories – a 40% increase. CCN has been featured in all major national papers multiple times, and across prominent broadcast and radio shows.

The network's close contacts with the BBC in particular have proved invaluable: with the write-up of the PwC report being the third-most read story across the BBC's UK homepage that morning. The network's Budget Survey was covered across 144 different outlets, including the BBC, The i, and the Guardian. CCN also continued our local focus by working with member councils to feature it across local radio stations. This is estimated to have reached some 36 million people.

CCN's yearly website visits in 2020 saw growth in visitors of 101% compared to 2019, and page views increased by 60%. The launch of the PwC local government reorganisation report saw over 3,500 individuals use the website that day alone. Alongside Twitter, CCN continues to grow our other social media platforms, with the number of LinkedIn followers increasing from 200 to over 1,000 – a 400% rise.



Media & Communications

CCN's objectives

Looking ahead, CCN's key objective is to maintain momentum on national media coverage, focusing on securing prominent stories on all major projects and placing reactive media comment.

Due to the amount of media coverage CCN has received, the team have bought media monitoring software to effectively track coverage. This will be reviewed during the year.

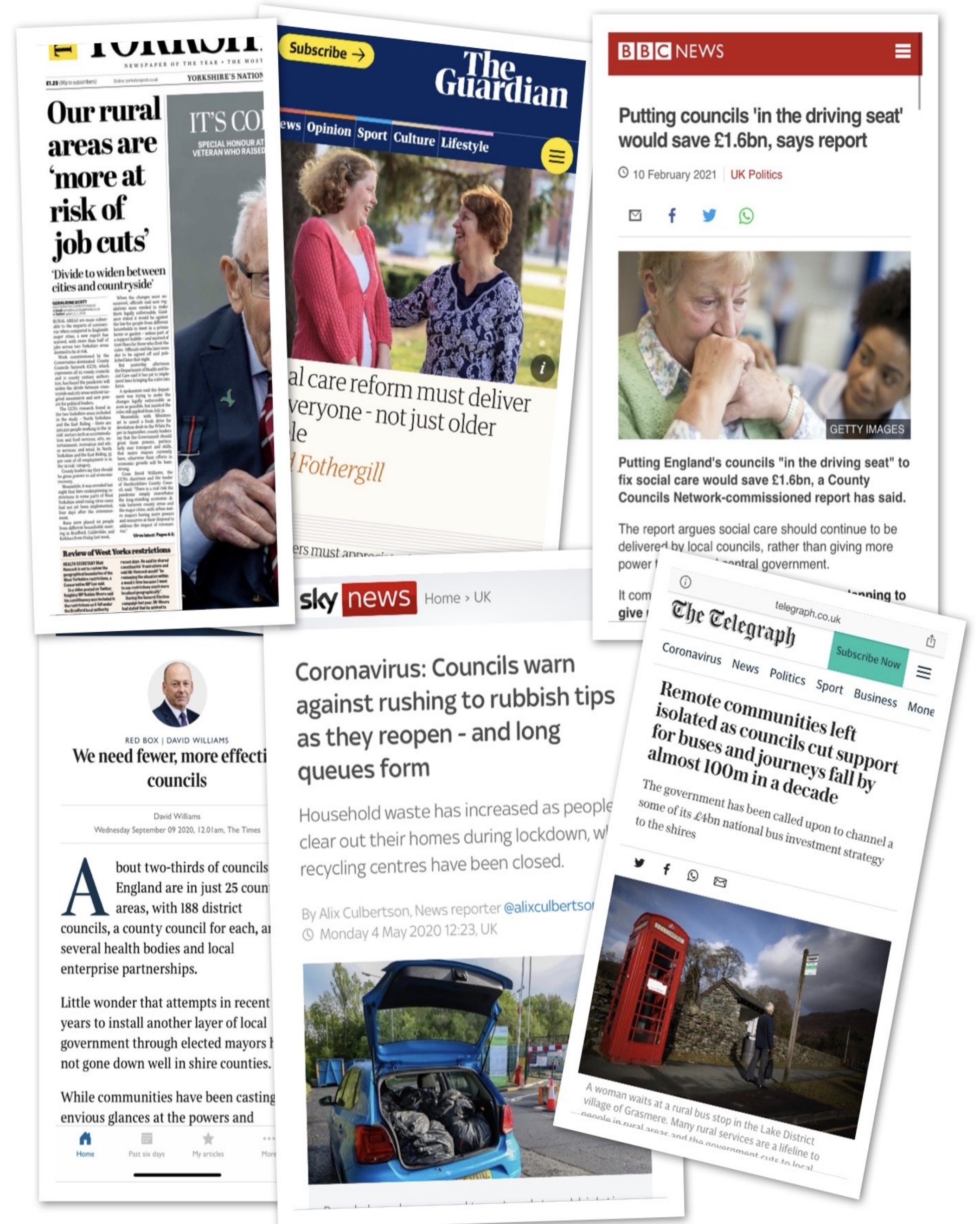
CCN will also seek to focus on further multimedia campaigns this year, producing more in-house and external videos and dedicated social media content. CCN's recent #KeepCareLocal campaign, designed to illustrate the benefits of locally delivered care, included targeted articles in the Guardian and on the BBC, a microsite, and a video produced as part of the campaign has been viewed almost 4,000 times.

The network will seek to secure media in emerging channels, such as Times Radio, and more coverage in growing news outlets, such as LBC and The i. Furthermore, the team will build on the links it has built up with ITV and secure more broadcast coverage with Sky.

Forthcoming media campaigns earmarked for this year include multimedia campaigns to illustrate the benefits of strategic planning, plus traditional campaigns on the financial challenges facing counties, particularly in children's services. The network will also resume our advocacy on the fair funding review in the mainstream media.

Another element of CCN's media work has been to ensure that our own media channels are as strong as possible in an age of increasing self-publication, and this year CCN will undertake a review to improve output.

A key early objective is to refresh the CCN website, bringing in a brand-new look and feel to the policy pages, and most importantly, updating content to be relevant in a post-Coronavirus world. The team is also exploring the feasibility of hosting dedicated campaign pages on the website.



There are also plans to invest in video-editing software to produce tailored videos and different types of self-produced media, alongside ambitions to grow the network's social media channels and take advantage of emerging channels.

As part of this Business Plan, and our new campaign **Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal** we have updated our branding and exploring options for a new logo. This will modernise our external branding for events and the CCN conference, alongside our wider external material. The team will also continue to produce the majority of designed publications in-house, delivering a consistent and improved appearance for all published materials, while also securing better value for money.

The in-house designed and produced documents showcasing counties' 'best practice' during the first months of the Coronavirus, and our analysis on virus cases were two of the most downloaded documents of the website last year, showing the impact this material can have.

Work Programme 2020/21

Overview

The activity of the network, and the context of our new campaign **Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal** provides the foundations for our advocacy in 2021/22.

The following sections provide a summary of the key major projects and activity across our six priorities. Our priorities and work streams will be underpinned by cross-cutting policy development, communications and corporate activity. A full detailed work programme, including all actions, details of responsible officers and timescales, underpins the below summary.

Our major projects and core activity will enable CCN to put forward evidence-based and practical proposals across **sustainable and fair funding, reforming health, social care & children's social care** and securing **devolution for all** to ensure our members have the foundations in place to achieve their ambitions.

Our work programme will also undertake extensive work to demonstrate counties can do more for their places by **creating and strengthening communities, growing our economies**, and **tackling climate change**.



Sustainable & fair funding

Recovering council finances through a multi-year funding settlement, delivering the fair funding review and reforming local government finance so it is more efficient.



Reforming health, social care & children's social care

A solution to social care reform and keeping care services local; improving integration with health; investing in early intervention and prevention; and reforming special educational needs and disabilities legislation.



Devolution for all

A practical framework for devolved powers, institutional and structural reform to genuinely drive powers down to local communities, from Whitehall to County Hall.



Creating & strengthening communities

A more strategic approach to planning, matched by new infrastructure financing, while enabling counties to continue to provide culture services, improve community safety, well-being and resilience.



Growing our economies

Creating the conditions for economic recovery by harnessing the role of county authorities in place-based growth, devolving skills budgets and investing in transport and connectivity.



Tackling climate change

Supporting councils to reduce their carbon emissions, improving parks, public spaces and waste management, and investing in green infrastructure and resilience.

Work Programme

Sustainable & Fair Funding

Our approach

The Budget 2021 showed that while continuing short-term support for the economy and additional expenditure on the pandemic response, a longer term programme of fiscal consolidation will be considered later this year in the Spending Review.

At a time where there will be competing demands on the Treasury, CCN must continue to demonstrate the scale of the funding challenge facing our member councils and the long-term impact of Covid-19. This will necessitate the delivery of robust and compelling evidence to influence the Spending Review.

The pandemic has also asked serious questions around the long-term viability of some taxes and funding streams. Recent consultations on the future of the New Homes Bonus and the forthcoming publication of the next stages in the fundamental review of business rates provides the platform for our advocacy in this area. CCN we will engage extensively with any proposed reforms to council tax and highlight the disparity in council tax rates.

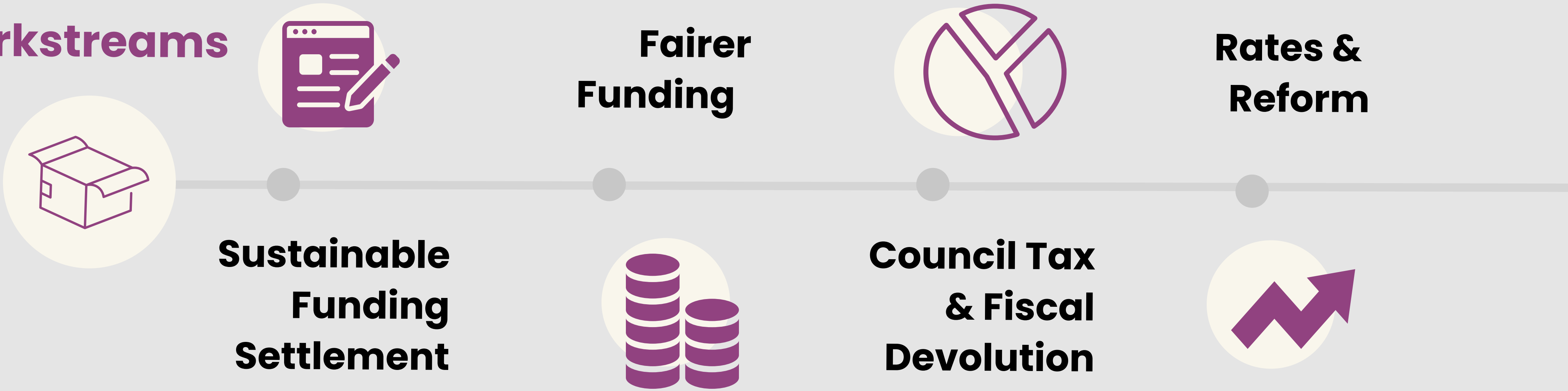
With the Government continuing its commitment to 'levelling up', CCN must revive our campaign for fairer funding, demonstrating that this remains key to delivering this important policy agenda.

However, we must avoid 'blank-cheque' arguments. Our policy development and advocacy will convey the need to reform the local government finance system, so it is fairer and more efficient. Most importantly, we will outline how investment in local government will allow councils to preserve frontline services; invest in local and national priorities; and continue to innovate service delivery.

Major Projects



Our Workstreams



Work Programme

Sustainable & Fair Funding

Key activity & actions

Sustainable Funding Settlement

- Produce at least three 'CCN Analysis' pieces exploring specific areas of local government funding, finance and/or expenditure. Data analysis to be undertaken internally or with the support of external consultancy where additional expertise is required.
- Continue detailed preparations ahead of Spending Review submission, working closely with MHCLG officials to build evidence on the financial challenges facing local government, and specific challenges facing county authorities to directly engage with the Treasury.
- Gathering further research and examples of efficiency and transformation, including what is transferable across local authorities, to be included in our Spending Review submission.
- Support the local government sector in continuing to make the case for sustainable resources and an increased quantum of funding for all councils, with focused advocacy in the lead up to key announcements.

Fair Funding

- Review campaign on fairer funding, making the case for the government to launch a new consultation on the review of relative needs and resources in the Spring and ensure all funding streams are distributed fairly.
- Continue to shape and challenge the national narrative regarding inequity in national funding distribution and council tax burdens in different parts of the country.
- Coordinated public affairs and communications to maintain momentum and prioritisation of the fair funding review. This includes direct support for local fair funding campaigns being led by member councils and direct MP engagement.
- Ensure continuing county representation on the LGA Steering Board and Fair Funding Technical Working Groups overseeing the Fair Funding Review.

Council Tax & Fiscal Devolution

- Continue to shape and challenge the national narrative regarding inequity in council tax burdens in different parts of the country. Engage extensively with any proposed reforms put forward by Government and monitor effectiveness of council tax income guarantee schemes.
- Campaign for increased freedom over council tax through the removal of the referendum threshold for council tax increases and further fiscal devolution to county and unitary authorities.

Rates & Reform

- CCN will seek to fully engage with the government's fundamental review of business rates, building on our research to-date with Pixel Financial Management and Grant Thornton. If 75% is to be implemented, CCN will review our proposals on the two-tier split, making the case for a higher tier share of locally retained rates for county councils.
- Engage extensively with, and respond to, the government's consultation on the review of New Homes Bonus. Develop a quantitative and qualitative evidence base on the impact of the policy on county authorities. This should include options for reviewing the role of incentives so they better reward upper-tier councils vital role in providing infrastructure.

Your CCN spokespeople....



Cllr Carl Les
Finance Spokesperson

Cllr Julian German,
Rural Spokesperson



Work Programme

Reforming Health, Social Care & Children's Services

Our approach

Building on our recent report with Newton we will ensure we engage policy makers at all levels on our *Optimised Local Delivery Model*, arguing for adult social care to remain locally delivered and embedded in communities, underpinned by a long-term resolution to sustainable funding.

Alongside this, CCN will seek to influence the implementation of the recent Health White Paper. We will make the case for parity of esteem for local government, most notably through better-designed statutory Integrated Care Systems (ICSSs) which align to county boundaries and incorporate local government as equal partners.

CCN will make sure that the successes of the transfer of public health to councils will be firmly at the forefront of Government thinking within wider health reforms, alongside a greater focus on children's health. The pandemic has demonstrated that public health is a system which is most effectively delivered locally in conjunction with communities.

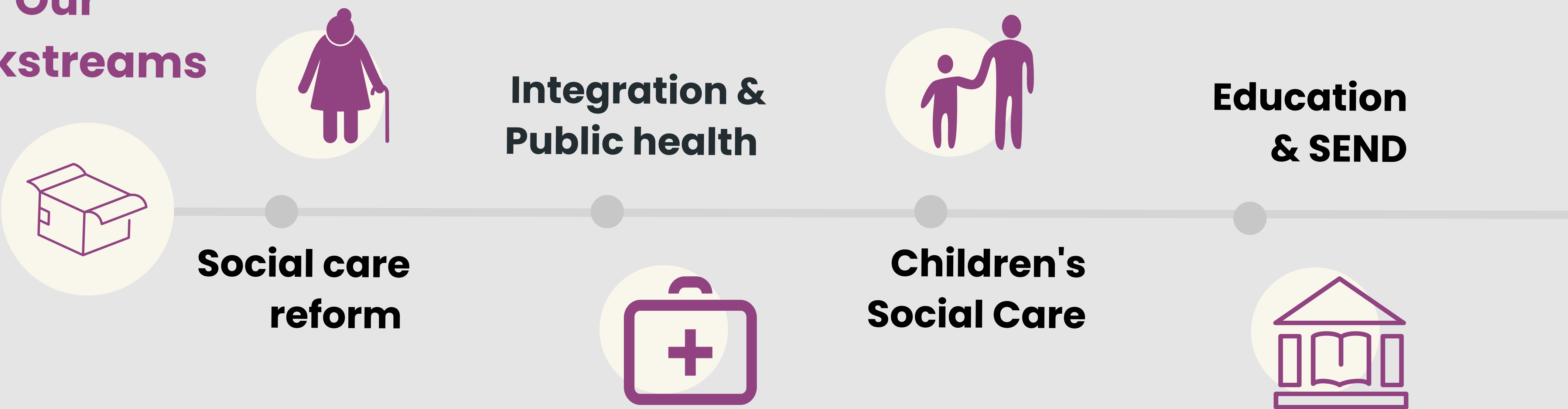
As the vaccination programme begins to make recovery a reality, local authorities will need to prioritise the needs of children and young people – the 'hidden' victims of the pandemic. The Government recently launched a wide-ranging Review into children's social care, which will be conducted throughout 2021/22 and will provide the focus for wide-ranging CCN's work in this area.

CCN will maintain a focus on education. Issues around home-to-school transport remain a major priority for county authorities. We will continue to push for sufficient funding for, and reforms to, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services.

Major Projects



Our workstreams



Work Programme

Reforming Health, Social Care & Children's Services

Key activity & actions

Adult Social Care Reform

- Build on CCN's four dedicated reports on adult social care in 2020/21 to help influence the development of the Government's proposals for adult social care reform.
- Engage extensively with Government on the development of the new quality and inspection framework which will support health and care reform.
- Seek opportunities for CCN lead members to meet with Ministers and Senior Civil Servants in relation to health and care reform and other pertinent issues facing social care in county areas; and actively engage and seek to influence external stakeholders via other Officer groupings such as County Health & Social Care Forum and ACCE meetings.

Integration & Public Health

- Maintain close dialogue with Government and relevant stakeholders to influence the direction of travel for legislation and implementation of the measures outlined in the Health and Care White Paper.
- Lobby Government to get a clear picture on where public health fits within wider health and care reform in a post-COVID world, utilising the 2019 CCN commissioned research from Shared Intelligence and LG Futures, to continue to highlight the value of public health services remaining part of local government.
- Make the case to Government for county councils to have a more active role in the commissioning and delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) including working to ensure that the recommendations in the independent review are fully implemented by Government.

Children's Services

- Engage with and support the new Independent Review of Children's Social Care to ensure the county perspective is fully reflected in the evidence gathered by the Review team.

- Building on our dedicated research in 2020, continue to highlight the pressure placed on local authority children's services funding, exacerbated by increasing demand over the past decade and reduction in preventative services.
- Undertake research to improve guidance around the offer for care leavers, supporting a consistent county-wide offer on entitlements.
- Ensure that the specific health and care needs of children are reflected in the government's reforms led by the Health and Care White paper.

Education & SEND

- Monitor the smooth implementation of the post-Covid 'return to school' initiative including ensuring the 'catch up' measures for children's education are effective, adequately funded, and particularly meet the needs of the most vulnerable children in counties.
- Ensure the SEND Review established in 2019 reports its findings and clarify how the Government plans meet the upfront costs of provision in the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) via the Spending Review.
- Further develop CCN's evidence base on the cost-pressures in the provision of school places and education services in county areas, including the cost of home-to-school transport.

Your CCN spokespeople....



Cllr Keith Glazier,
Children's Spokesperson



Cllr David Fothergill,
Social Care & Health
Spokesperson

Work Programme

Devolution for All

Our approach

CCN has long argued that the Government should set out a clear framework for devolution, and we will continue to do so over the coming period. The long-trailed White Paper presents an opportunity not only to provide clear guidance to local areas in developing proposals, but to reset the relationship with CCN member councils if there is a genuine and tangible offer from Government on devolution.

Harnessing the strategic role of county and unitary authorities must be at the heart of the devolution proposition, and our advocacy and policy development will continue to argue that Government should seek to build on the foundations already in place in our areas through a minimum default baseline level of devolution and bespoke deals.

CCN will continue to work to articulate that governance arrangements should be determined locally, setting out a range of governance and accountability options that councils could put in place and building on research reports published in the past 12 months. We will continue to actively support those exploring structural reform, alongside detailed engagement on wider devolution proposals.

A particular focus will be given to demonstrating our member councils’ role in delivering community-based services right down to local neighbourhood and individual households and engaging County MPs.

More widely, our work programme will also consider how we showcase the specific benefits of whole-place public service reform and the transformation work of our member councils in a post-pandemic world.

Major Projects



Our workstreams



Devolution White Paper



Accountability



Local Government Reform



Public Service Reform



Work Programme

Devolution for All

Key activity & actions

Devolution White Paper

- Undertake direct engagement with government officials to shape the development of the Devolution White Paper. Recognise the unique opportunities and challenges facing our county and unitary authorities, building on experiences to date.
- Provide extensive support to CCN member councils to inform the development of devolution and local government reorganisation proposals, including sharing intelligence and direct involvement in CCN projects.
- Undertake further work to set out the need for the White Paper to provide as much parity with Mayoral Combined Authorities on devolution as possible. This includes powers for a Statutory Spatial Plan; responsibility for the Shared Prosperity Fund; delivery of the Education and Skills Funding Agency; and powers over Bus Franchising.
- Explore the possibility of further research on the impact of fiscal devolution and certain tax/revenue raising reforms in counties and the relationship between central/local government post-Brexit.

Governance & Accountability

- Work with member councils to understand their developing plans on devolution governance. Develop a detailed understanding of, and practical solution to, the operation of a combined authority/elected mayor in county areas. Any mayoral combined authority should be tailored to recognise the additional complexity of two-tier areas, including voting rights between partners.
- Undertake internal research with member councils on county identity, governance and localism, with particular focus on the historical importance and effectiveness of community governance. Engage with CCN authorities and external partners such as National Association of Local Councils (NALC) to gather evidence on community level locality governance.

Local Government Reform

- Continue to proactively represent member councils in relation to local government reorganisation. Make the case for the White Paper to set out a criteria for unitary reform. This should include confirmation of a minimum population limit 'substantially more' than 300,000 with no upper population limit; it should ensure proposals offer better public service delivery across the area; and provide the thresholds and tests of local consensus.
- Continue to work with member councils to explore how county councils are providing 'place-based leadership' and the opportunities presented by a retained and reformed two-tier governance.

Public Sector Reform

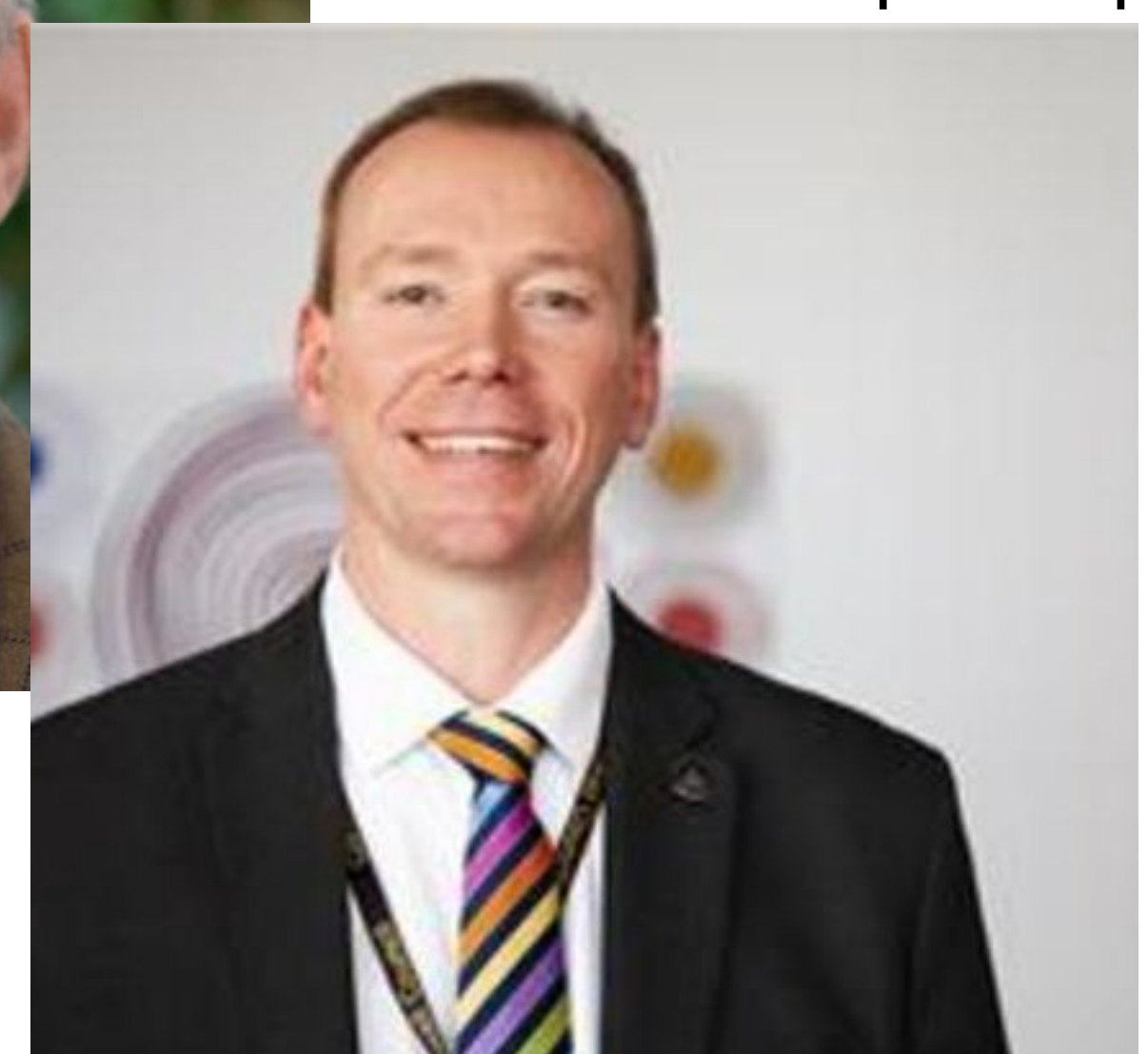
- Position counties as the lead body for driving whole-place public service reform. Undertake research, analysis and engagement with member councils to support arguments in favour of public sector reform and collaboration at county scale, and reforms that simplify and integrate wider public service providers. Emphasise maximum co-terminosity between county boundaries, CCGs, STPs and reforms to LEPs.
- Gathering further research and examples of efficiency and transformation, including what is transferable across local authorities, to be included in our Spending Review advocacy.

Your CCN spokespeople....



Cllr Martin Hill
Devolution Spokesperson

Cllr Julian German,
Rural Spokesperson



Work Programme

Creating & Strengthening Communities

Our approach

The last year has seen a step-change in the Government’s planning reform agenda. CCN has advocated our member views on all areas of the planned reforms, but with a particular focus on a replacement for the Duty to Cooperate.

CCN has been actively engaging with MHCLG and sector stakeholders to build support for our proposals to establish more formal strategic planning arrangements. This year, we will build on our proposals published in November 2020, and make the case for cross-boundary strategic planning, and a stronger role for counties. We will also continue to respond to Government consultations on all major aspects of planning, including those that will directly affect planning authorities such as Permitted Development Rights.

Infrastructure investment will also play a critical role in creating and strengthening local communities. We will build on our previous work with the Royal Town Planning Institute, which explored the ways in which different local authorities plan and fund infrastructure.

Community resilience has been a crucial factor in managing the impact of the pandemic. Looking ahead we will undertake work exploring support for the local voluntary sector to rebuild and thrive; nurturing the growth in volunteers fostered by mutual aid networks; and ensuring that local and regional cultural activities return.

CCN will also undertake advocacy on fire services and the role of our member councils in community safety, including tackling county lines and domestic abuse.

Major Projects



01
Strategic planning

Continue our advocacy and policy development to support the introduction of 'Strategic Planning Advisory Bodies' as a replacement for the Duty to Cooperate and a formal strategic planning framework.

Commission research that takes a 'deep-dive' into members activity around infrastructure planning and delivery and supports CCN engagement in the development of the new Infrastructure Levy.

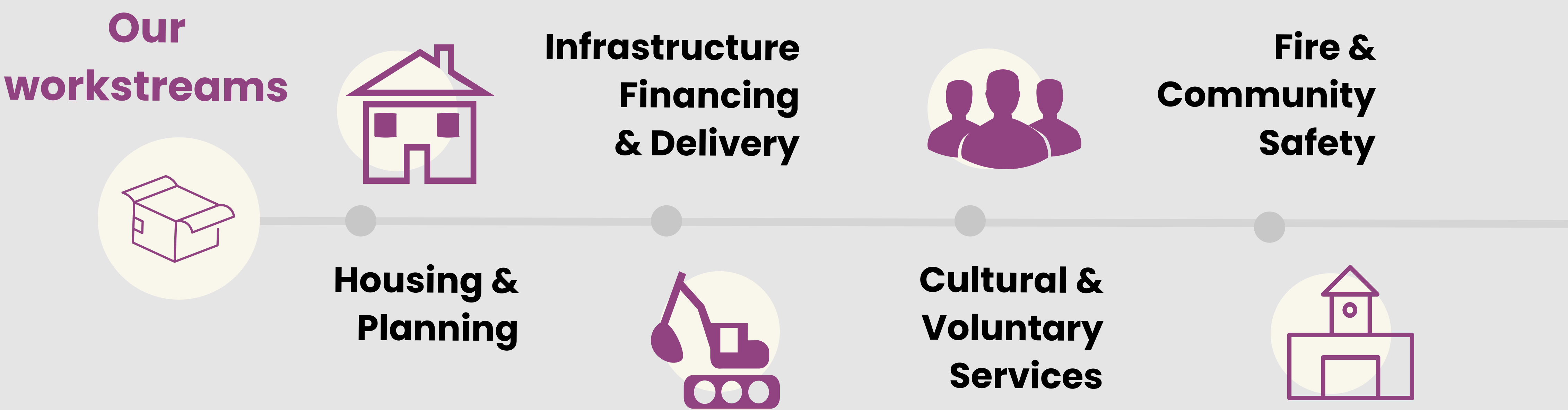
02
Infrastructure financing and delivery

Develop a research report highlighting the importance of the local authority role in assisting the voluntary sector to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

03
Helping the voluntary sector in recovery

Produce a report, based on a survey of member councils and wider engagement, on the scale of the issues facing them around the county lines phenomenon and the role of CCN member councils in tackling serious youth violence, drug use, and child criminal exploitation.

04
County lines



Work Programme

Creating & Strengthening Communities

Key activity & actions

Housing & Planning

- Continue to influence Government and partners to make the case for the return of a strategic element to the planning system – as set out by our work with Catriona Riddell. This will tie in with wider asks around devolution to county areas to match the same powers offered to city-regions, and the same opportunities to 'level-up'.
- Continue our engagement with government housing and planning consultations as they arise, responding to them with the views of both county and unitary member councils.
- Work with stakeholders to examine lessons learnt on homelessness from the pandemic and the 'Everyone in' scheme, and ensure that CCN members get a fair share of future resources.
- Produce at least three analysis pieces that highlight the issues facing county areas in the areas of housing, planning, and infrastructure.

Infrastructure Financing

- Refresh and reframe key infrastructure asks in the context of recovery and economic growth. Our work will also try to highlight the infrastructure funding gaps that counties face, and we will use this to argue for a more balanced distribution of capital infrastructure funding between counties and cities which better aligns with local priorities.
- Continue to make the case that counties should be given the same opportunities as metro-mayor areas, including the ability to set Strategic Infrastructure Tariffs in order to fund specific infrastructure projects that would help unlock land for development and support economic growth.
- Continue to make the case for reform to the Developer Contributions system ensuring that, in two-tier areas, contributions are distributed fairly to cover the range of physical and social infrastructure required for new development.

Fire & Community Safety

- Produce a report, based on a survey on member councils and wider engagement, on the scale of the issues facing them around the county lines phenomenon and the role of CCN member councils in tackling serious youth violence, drug use, and child criminal exploitation.
- CCN will support member authorities in taking on their new statutory responsibilities, expected to be enshrined in the new Domestic Abuse Act, including sharing best practice and advocating around emerging issues during the transition in 2021/2.
- Undertake research with county fire authorities supporting their ambitious to retain and improve fire and rescue services within their authority's oversight.

Cultural & Voluntary Services

- In light of the impact of the pandemic on cultural services, make the case for certainty of funding for cultural facilities such as libraries and cultural venues to ensure that member councils can guarantee the continued provision of services to residents.

Your CCN spokespeople....



Cllr Sam Corcoran
Communities & Environment
Spokesperson



Cllr Tim Oliver
Housing & Planning
Spokesperson

Work Programme

Growing Our Economies

Our approach

As we emerge from the latest lockdown, our work this year will build on our 2020 reports with Grant Thornton and promote counties as place-leaders, highlighting their role as convenors, facilitators, investors and vision-setters across their areas. The network will explore further opportunities to commission cutting edge research to support our member councils' ambitions and highlight the opportunities presented by post-pandemic place-based growth strategies.

The recent Budget confirmed CCN member councils as the lead local authorities for the Community Renewal Fund, whilst the prospectus for the Levelling-Up Fund outlines that county and unitary authorities will be the lead council in bidding for significant transport projects. CCN will support members to develop bids as part of our work in shaping the levelling-up agenda and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

More widely, it is expected that the Government could seek to reform the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and wider growth partnerships as part of the Devolution & Local Recovery White Paper. Building on our recent advocacy on Growth Boards, CCN will position the role of county and unitary authorities as reforms to LEPs are potentially considered, and also support our member councils' role in leading effective sub-regional transport boards.

CCN will undertake dedicated advocacy on important issues related to other areas of transport and connectivity. we will continue to make the case for sufficient long-term capital investment in local road networks and undertake advocacy on sustainable funding for cycling infrastructure in rural areas.

Major Projects



Our workstreams



Work Programme

Growing Our Economies

Key activity & actions

Place-Based Recovery

- CCN will create a new senior officers group focused on place-based services, providing a platform for expert input into CCN advocacy, shape consultation responses, and provide a forum for sharing best practice across member councils.
- CCN will make the case for Growth Boards to be established across the country, undertaking further analysis of their development to date in county areas. This should be a statutory duty placed on county authorities to convene and co-ordinate key stakeholders, which could include neighbouring authorities and LEPs, on all matters related to growth.
- Building on our reports with Grant Thornton on place-based growth and recovery, the network will explore further opportunities to commission cutting edge research to support our member councils' ambitions and highlight the opportunities presented by post-pandemic place-based growth strategies.

Strategic Investment

- CCN will engage with Government as it develops policies and funding streams aimed at recovery and regenerating areas, including the role of county and unitary authorities in the delivery of the Towns Fund and High Street Funds.
- Support members as the Community Renewal Fund and Levelling-up Funds are implemented. We will also engage extensively with the Government as it rolls out pilots on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This will showcase how counties have previously used EU Structural Funding, and the impact that it has made with the aim of securing the longevity of the fund.

Transport & Connectivity

- Continue to make the case for sufficient long-term capital investment in local road networks following our recent advocacy.

- Following the publication of the Government's National Bus Strategy, we will work with members as they begin to prepare their Bus Service Improvement Plans, and continue to make the case for the adequate funding of bus services in rural areas. We will also support those members who wish to explore bus franchising powers, and will engage with the consultation on the future of Bus Service Operators Grant when it is published.
- Support and position the role of counties in driving regional and sub-regional transport, infrastructure and growth initiatives. We will share good practice, showcase the leadership of our members, and engage with key stakeholders to progress the role of counties in this agenda.
- Work with members to understand the additional costs and complexities faced by county authorities in providing sustainable cycling infrastructure.

Skills & Employment

- CCN will continue to put forward the case for the devolution and consolidation of skills funding and functions, which is unevenly distributed across the country. CCN will work to ensure that any replacement scheme to the current EU skills funding mechanism is comparable in size and recognises the role that counties should play in shaping and delivering local skills strategies alongside local partners, education institutions and businesses.

Your CCN spokespeople....



Cllr Stephen Giles-Medhurst
Transport Spokesperson

Cllr Barry Lewis
Economic Growth Spokesperson



Work Programme

Tackling Climate Change

Our approach

This year, our research and advocacy will incorporate climate change in all aspects of our lobbying to make sure it is fully considered in any developments. We will give our members a platform and space to share best practice, to learn from each other and to encourage innovation.

The Government has committed to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, with many of our member councils committing to be carbon neutral even earlier. Given this, it is imperative that the Government gives local authorities the resources, finances and legislation they require to act as place leaders to drive the necessary action.

The centre piece of our programme of activity will be the development, and launch, of a major new report *Taking Centre Stage – Enhancing the role of Counties to deliver the UK Carbon Zero Targets*. It will shape the strategy for greater political, policy and financial support for CCN councils to deliver our climate change ambitions and wider opportunities for green economic recovery.

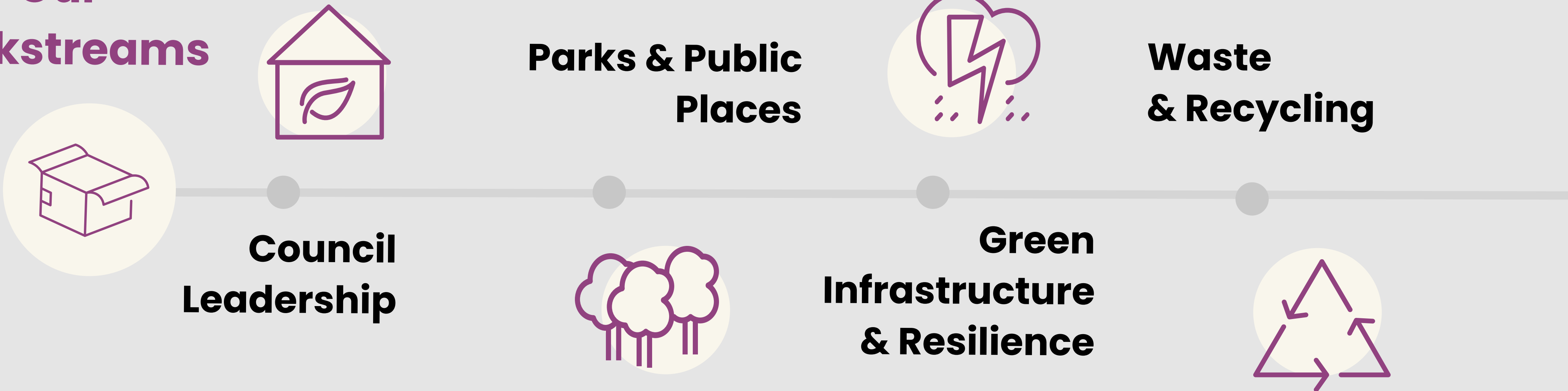
More widely, the activity in our work programme prioritises improving parks, public spaces and waste management, and investing in green infrastructure and resilience against extreme weather.

This pandemic has vividly demonstrated the value of our parks and public spaces and increased demand on waste and recycling services. It has bought to light some of the challenges councils face given the wider financial pressures from lost income during the pandemic. CCN will work with member councils to understand these challenges and undertake specific advocacy.

Major Projects



Our workstreams



Work Programme

Tackling Climate Change

Key activity & actions

Council Leadership

- Highlight how councils are necessary in leading the green recovery and use events such as COP26 and G7 to show this on an international stage. Produce at least three media articles showcasing specific areas of local government decarbonisation and sustainability activity and interventions.
- Work with ACCE to build and develop a series of policy and resource asks of central government to achieve local climate change targets. Work closely with officer groups such as Policy & Strategy to share learning and best practice to enable and encourage innovation.
- Work with our members to understand regulation and legislative changes which will support them to enact their climate declarations. Consider how procurement rules and regulations could be altered to ensure that all contractors are required to reduce carbon emissions and to place a 'carbon/environmental cost' on competing bids.
- Incorporate climate change into all other workstreams making sure it is fully considered in our policy development so there are no unintended consequences as a result of our lobbying. CCN to demonstrate leadership by considering the steps needed to reduce the carbon footprint for events such as the CCN Conference.

Parks & Public Places

- Covid-19 has increased visit to parks and public places through the government's 'stay local' guidance. CCN will work with member councils to understand the financial implications and ensure councils have the funding required to continue these services.

Green Infrastructure & Resilience

- Work with government to ensure green infrastructure is a priority and to ensure this is fairly distributed around the UK, including the installation of electric charging points.

- Work with our members to understand their infrastructure needs for adverse weather events. Lobby government for a fair distribution of new flood defence investment as our areas will be on the front-line responding to the consequences of the climate emergency.
- Lobby government to review the Bellwin payments scheme, and work with our members to make sure our needs are reflected, so they can be reimbursed properly for the additional expenditure as a result of adverse weather events.

Waste & Recycling

- Lobby the government to incentivise and encourage greater collaboration and consolidation of waste contracts into single waste strategies to improve joint-working and increase financial efficiencies.
- As part of CCN's Spending Review submission make the case for a review of discretionary charging powers of upper-tier councils for waste and recycling services, including freedom over fees and charges.

Your CCN spokespeople....



Cllr Barry Lewis
Economic
Growth Spokesperson



Cllr Sam Corcoran
Communities &
Environment
Spokesperson

Strategic Partners

A view on the year ahead

As part of our collaboration with the business and third-sector community, CCN has this year established a new 'strategic partnership' offer for organisations who will feel add value to the work of member councils and CCN.

Our member councils understand the benefits our partners can bring, from insight, experience, and sharing knowledge, to ideas and innovation. These partnerships are an essential part of CCN's sponsorship and corporate strategy.

CCN has established strategic partnerships with six organisations: **CCLA**, **FutureGov**, **Grant Thornton**, **IMPOWER**, **Newton** and **PwC**.

As part of the strategic partnership offer, we commit to collaborate with organisations on areas of mutual interest, which provide our member councils with new insights and support the advocacy objectives of the organisation.

For this Business Plan, our strategic partners have provided a short contribution. They outline why they are supporting CCN over the coming year, their work with the network to date, and their priorities in collaborating with CCN and our member councils over the coming period.

[Click here for more information on our strategic partners](#)





Kelly Watson, Relationship Manger, Local Government

This year's strategic partnership with CCN is the next phase in our strong collaboration with the network over many years. Today, CCLA manages over £2.5bn for over 700 local authority clients of all types, with particularly strong relationships with county and unitary authorities, managing around £420m of investments on their behalf. Working with these authorities, we share a determination to maximise our positive impact on society.

Our aim is to help by harnessing the power of investment markets. Furthermore, recognising that these markets are only as healthy as the people, communities and environment that support them, we believe firmly that we have a responsibility to build a more sustainable future.

Addressing the risks and opportunities associated with climate change and the transition to a low carbon economy is, therefore, a highest engagement priority. We engage with companies on a broad range of other issues, including executive remuneration, modern day slavery, mental health, inequality (including the Living Wage), health and safety, labour standards, gender diversity, single-use plastics, and nutrition. We would like to enhance our work on these issues through closer working with CCN and member councils.

CCLA makes no claim to having the answers to the challenges facing society today, but it is clear we have certain skills and an interest in social, economic, and environmental justice, which sets us apart from other managers. The ambition is to deliver trusted, responsibly managed, and strongly performing products that are aligned with our clients' values and purpose. A description of 'good investment' that most people would recognise.

CCLA Investment Management Limited and CCLA Fund Managers Limited are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.



Matthew Skinner, Chief Executive

FutureGov is a change agency, on a mission to build 21st-century public sector institutions that are catalysts for change in the internet and climate era.

For over a decade, we've supported organisations with digital transformation, service design and community development to radically improve outcomes for communities in the 21st century.

For us, becoming a strategic partner of CCN means working with some of the biggest players in local government to take on the most challenging social issues of our era.

We believe local authorities have the opportunity to transition to being conveners in their place. This will require new types of public service leadership and a strong vision for creating a new, networked approach to creating public value in places.

In terms of priorities, the COVID-19 pandemic shone an uncompromising light on many areas of public service that are broken. Over the next year, we're aiming to work with our CCN partners to radically change our approaches to health and social care, start making an immediate impact against the climate crisis and engage with our citizens and communities to help make difficult decisions and take action on complex issues.

We want to share best practices, building on what we've learned together with the rest of the sector, seeing an opportunity for everyone to save money by changing their relationships with communities, place leadership and using different models for delivering public services.



Paul Dosset, Head of Local Government

CCN is a key strategic partner for Grant Thornton, allowing us to engage with senior leaders from county authorities to debate the challenges and opportunities being faced outside London and other metropolitan areas, and to test our concepts and our thinking.

Over the last year we have worked with many county authorities as consultants, advisors and auditors. We also worked with CCN on a number of key reports: Place-Based Growth, Place-Based Recovery and Analysing the Impact of Covid-19 on County Authority Finances.

Our priorities for the coming year are supporting councils in managing change and building resilience – organisational resilience as well as resilience of the places they shape and lead. In particular we would hope to work with CCN and CCN member councils on how they ensure ongoing financial sustainability, realise sustainable growth and economic recovery from Covid-19, ensure effective management of demand led services, and in responding to public sector reform. We will also be wanting to support sector led development in improving governance, where required, in the use in light of recent public interest reports and investigations.

We fully support CCN's new core campaign *Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal*. County areas are the places where growth will need to occur for the government's "levelling up" agenda to be successful, as the Place Based Growth report highlighted. The Place Based Recovery report set out how Covid-19 has only strengthened the argument for place-based responses to economic recovery as well as the delivery of longer term, sustainable growth to address spatial imbalances and inequalities.

We look forward to our continued collaboration.

IMPOWER



Jeremy Cooper, Head of Local Government

IMPOWER is proud to be a strategic partner of the CCN, supporting its efforts to work closely with member councils on issues of importance to them. One example of this is the work we recently undertook together to better understand organisational resilience.

With the input of an impressive number of organisations and individuals (11 councils, 28 council chief execs, 89 council leaders and deputies, and 36 complexity specialists to be exact!) we were able to develop a framework to assess a council's resilience levels.

We applied this to several councils to provide a snapshot of resilience at a uniquely revealing time. The report makes the case for councils to understand resilience as an organisational capability, and to move quickly to invest in it. We look forward to further collaboration with the CCN on this topic over the coming months.

Our priorities for the year ahead include acting as a delivery partner to support councils bouncing forward, which is closely aligned to the CCN's core campaign for 2021/22: Counties; Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal.

We will continue to deliver impact right across councils, building from the big complex demand-led service areas of health interface, social care and high needs. We will continue to work with the CCN to ensure we stay close to emerging priorities.



NEWTON

Steven Phillips, Senior Partner

Newton and CCN have built and developed their relationship over the last few years into a valuable and collaborative partnership, and we welcome the conversations and opportunities that this provides us.

Over the last year we have been fortunate enough to work with 6 member councils to deliver multi-year and multi-phase transformation programmes and we hope that the insight and experience we are able to bring from these engagements is valuable to both CCN and other member councils.

We recently completed a programme of work with CCN, culminating in a report on the 'Future of Adult Social Care'. The programme involved engaging with 26 county authorities and over 150 individuals – including those working in social care and health; individuals with lived experience of social care; and their families.

We believe this engagement added a huge amount of value to the programme. It provided a richness of local expertise and experience that resulted in a report that reflects the views of the sector and beyond. We were delighted with the reception to the work, and hope that further value comes from stimulating conversations both locally and nationally on adult social care reform, and crucially the role of local government within that.

Over the next year, in addition to our work in adult social care, we will be focussing on building on our existing insight and experience in children's services. We hope this provides further opportunities to collaborate with CCN and member councils.



Paul Deegan, Lead Partner, Local Public Services

Working as a strategic partner to the CCN is incredibly important to us. Our team comprises consultants who have worked either with or in local government for a large proportion of their careers. We are passionate about the importance of the sector and its centrality to some of the most progressive agendas in our society today.

While we work with councils of all types, a lot of our recent work has been with county and unitary councils. The relationships we formed with many stakeholders in these councils catalysed the relationship we have now developed with the CCN. This has already led to the publication of a number of landmark reports.

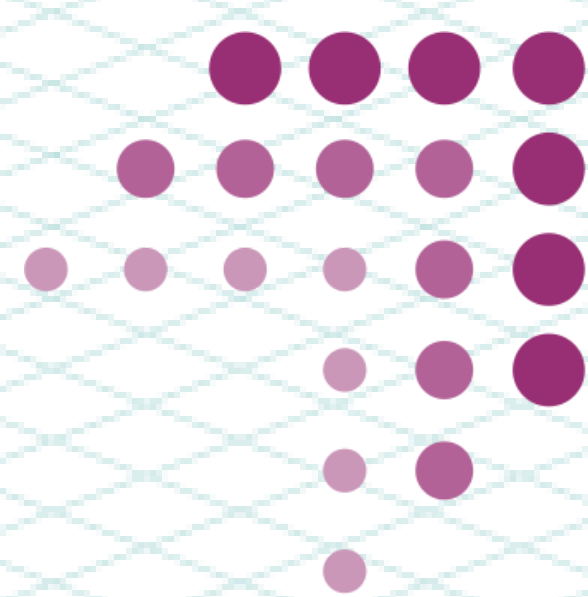
In 2020/21 this included our report on the importance of scale when considering proposals for local government reorganisation, as well as additional work on this topic with many member councils. We also continue to support transformation programmes, service specific changes, strategy and technology implementation programmes.

Over the coming year we intend to continue to provide the support, expertise and capacity that our clients have told us they value so much. We will also continue to champion the sector and work with member councils to challenge our collective ambition. We are delighted to be working with the CCN to shape this thinking through our work on the *Future of Local Government* – a collaborative research project which has the potential to shape the future of the sector.

The demands of the past twelve months have been unprecedented, and now more than ever local government needs to be at the heart of helping the country rebuild, as we look forward to a brighter future.



COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK



COUNTIES

LEADING RECOVERY
DELIVERING RENEWAL

Founded in 1997, the County Councils Network is the voice of England's counties. A cross-party organisation, CCN develops policy, commissions research, and presents evidence-based solutions nationally on behalf of the largest grouping of local authorities in England.

In total, the 23 county councils and 13 unitary councils that make up the CCN represent 26 million residents, account for 39% of England's GVA, and deliver high-quality services that matter the most to local communities

The network is a cross-party organisation, expressing the views of member councils to the government and within the Local Government Association.

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@CCNOffice



County Councils Network



County Councils Network

www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk