

# Report to Cabinet

04 August 2026



## Local Government Association Withdrawal

### Lead Member:

Cllr. Jonathan Gullis – Leader of the Council

### Lead Officer:

Gordon Mole – Chief Executive

**Key Decision:** No

**Ward(s):** All Wards

**Appendices:** Not applicable

### Report Assurance:

|                    | Name         | Date       |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|
| Lead Officer       | Gordon Mole  | 13/07/26   |
| Monitoring Officer | Olwen Brown  | 20/07/2026 |
| Section 151        | Craig Turner | 17/07/26   |
| Chief Executive    |              |            |
| Cabinet Member     |              |            |

## Report Summary

Following the resolution of full Council on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026 to withdraw from the Local Government Association (LGA) immediately, this report sets out the Council's position in respect of its membership and next steps to be carried out.

## Recommendations

That the Cabinet:

1. Notes the will of the Council to seek immediate withdrawal from the Local Government Association including all committees, events, activities, and information sharing;
2. Notes the terms and conditions of LGA membership and agrees to delegate to the Service Director for Finance and Service Director, Legal & Governance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Portfolio Holder for Legal, Governance & Operational Performance to engage with the LGA to withdraw on immediate terms;
3. Notes the engagement with other authorities to understand the position of the Council outside of the LGA;
4. Notes the Council's withdrawal from LGA associated bodies, including the Local Councils Network and LG Inform.
5. Agrees that, should the purpose and structure of the LGA change significantly to address members' concerns as expressed in the motion to full Council, Cabinet will give due consideration to membership in future years.

## 1. Background

- 1.1. Following the commencement of the Council's new administration in May 2026, on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026 a motion was resolved at full Council to withdraw immediately from the Local Government Association.
- 1.2. The LGA acts as a representative body for councils in England, offering events, advice, training for members and officers and representation of the local government sector to UK Government.
- 1.3. Membership of the LGA is voluntary, and is paid in advance for each financial year. Annual membership of the LGA for 2026/2027 for the Council was £11,xxx. Additional costs are applicable for attendance at some events and activities, such as the annual LGA Conference.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's departure from the LGA has precedent, with a number of councils having left the LGA (with some electing to rejoin following changes of administration). Officers have sought to engage with those councils and officers who have experience of operating outside of the LGA to understand what, if any, areas they have required to resource which were previously provided by the LGA.

### 3. Strategic Approach

- 3.1. Officers have reviewed the relevant services provided by the LGA in the following areas:
  - 3.1.1 Annual employer-side negotiation of employee pay
  - 3.1.2 Data and information
  - 3.1.3 Information from UK Government
  - 3.1.4 Member and officer training
  - 3.1.5 Member committees and networks
  - 3.1.6 Participation in reviews and peer activity

#### **Annual Employer-side negotiations of employee pay**

- 3.2. Advice in relation to the Council's position in respect of annual pay negotiations was sought from West Midlands Employers, the representative body for councils in the region.
- 3.3. The LGA, as a membership body, acts as the host body for the Employers side of the NJC and the other local government negotiating bodies such as Fire and Rescue services, Teachers and Craft/ Red Book staff. In this role, the LGA acts as the national secretariat but agreements are technically negotiated by Elected Members which make up the Employer Side.
- 3.4. The Council will continue to implement its pay awards for National Joint Council (NJC) and JNC settlements. National Joint Council (Green Book) or JNC (Senior Manager) contracts mean that within their terms and conditions the Council has agreed, as the employer, to adhere to a number of provisions within those frameworks (for example the NJC pay spine and annual pay awards) in addition to any existing local arrangements of the employment contract which are not specified within the Green Book.
- 3.5. Councils including Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council who are NJC employers are bound by agreements made jointly by trades unions and the Employers Side negotiating body, independent of the involvement of the LGA. Employers can therefore apply NJC pay awards and whether they are LGA members or not.
- 3.6. West Midlands Employers shares all relevant staffing and pay-related information with all councils in the region, including those emanating from the LGA.

#### **Data and Information**

- 3.7. The LGA hosts the data resource *LG Inform*, which provides contextual, financial and performance data across a range of topic areas. This resource is funded by UK Government and is free to access. A separate product, *LG Inform Plus*, is utilised by the Council to complete its annual API (application programmable interface) data submission. *LG Inform Plus* is a commercial, chargeable product which does not form part of LGA membership and is available to all organisations whether members of the LGA or not.
- 3.8. Officers are currently reviewing the data required to enable Local Government Reorganisation and that which may be needed in the development of a new Council Plan 2026-2030.
- 3.9. Following the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation, officers will be working closely with officers from other Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent authorities and regularly network with other authorities through professional networks.

- 3.10. Officers will monitor any areas which require alternative data or information sharing arrangements and work with the Administration on requirements as may arise.

### **Information from UK Government**

- 3.11. Since 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has implemented a daily email briefing during parliamentary terms directly to all local authorities with key information and updates. MHCLG also hosts a place engagement team, whom officers meet on a regular basis to raise any points which may be applicable to the local government sector. Further updates are provided through West Midlands Employers.
- 3.12. UK Government funds a range of support activity which is delivered through organisations including the LGA, on areas such as sector support for Local Government Reorganisation. This support is available to all local authorities, whether members of the LGA or not.
- 3.13. UK Government departments also write regularly to the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, Statutory and Chief Officers, on a range of matters such as grant information, data provision and requests, legislative and policy changes.

### **Member and Officer Training**

- 3.14. The LGA has previously provided training to elected members including seminars on policy and practice, equality, regulatory committees (including training on licencing and planning), and induction resources (some of which are free to access).
- 3.15. The Council will not be able to access LGA training and briefing materials, or resources such as coaching for elected members. Officers have recently delivered training to committee members for planning and licencing, and are developing in-house training for newly elected members in areas such as standards and media training, and will regularly review what additional areas of training and development may be required. There may be an additional cost if this cannot be delivered by officers.
- 3.16. As noted above, MHCLG funds some training and development programmes, for example seminars to district and borough council officers on upper tier council services (SEND, Children's Services and Adult Social Care), which are delivered through the LGA but are open to all local authorities.
- 3.17. Through service training budgets and a commitment to continuing professional development, officers remain able to access to training and upskilling, including through sector professional networks.
- 3.18. LGA also provides advice to councils in areas such as workforce issues, skills and member support. Whilst the Council has significant professional experience in these and other areas, officers will utilise its networks, including West Midlands Employers, for any ad-hoc advice required.

### **Member committees and networks**

- 3.19. Annual Council nominates a representative to the Local Government Association, currently the Leader of the Council. This role acts as the key representative for the Council at the LGA. Members may seek election to policy and other committees such as the Local Government resources Committee, Neighbourhoods Committee and Inclusive Growth Committee within the LGA structure, which are based on a balance of council type and political balance.
- 3.20. The Council's appointed LGA representative attends the General Assembly as the Council's formal representative, while attendance at boards, committees, forums and networks depends on whether individual councillors have been appointed or elected into those LGA roles.

- 3.21. General Assembly is held during the LGA Annual Conference, for which there is an additional cost. In 2025, the price of attendance was c. £3,000, including accommodation for three representatives (one officer and two elected members). The Council did not attend the 2026 Annual Conference.
- 3.22. Elected members have also been able to provide services to other LGA members, such as peer support.
- 3.23. Going forward, in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, formal arrangements are in place for a Staffordshire Leaders' Board which covers a range of thematic areas, together with a focus on forthcoming implementation of Government policy in areas such as devolution. In addition, members may elect to work with their political groups for any formal or informal networks which exist.
- 3.24. Councillors and officers will not be able to attend LGA events following the passing of the resolution at full Council on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026 in their capacity as elected members or representatives of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.
- 3.25. The LGA also comprises networks for upper and lower-tier local authorities. The Local Councils Network (previously District Councils Network) provides support, advice, networking and guidance to lower-tier authorities, and membership of this body will also cease following the motion to full Council.

#### **Participation in reviews and peer activity**

- 3.26. The LGA oversees and supports additional activity, such as peer reviews for authorities. These remain accessible to authorities outside LGA membership, and London Borough of Bromley, which left the LGA in 2010, has just completed its peer review process. The Council was last peer reviewed in 2023 and is not due any further review ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.27. In the development of this report, officers engaged with the LGA Regional representative, West Midlands Employers and officers who had direct experience of withdrawing from the LGA in LB Barnet and LB Bromley. LB Bromley withdrew from the LGA some 16 years ago, and notes that in their consideration there are no areas of concern around being outside of the LGA, and no plans to rejoin the association.

## **4. Finance & Resources**

- 4.1. The Council's primary outlay in respect of the LGA is its annual subscription. Table 1, below sets out the subscription costs since 2021/2022, together with costs associated with the LGA Annual Conference, as noted in para 3.20 above. These costs do not include travel or accommodation expenses in relation to attendance at events and meetings, which are accrued to service budgets for officers or to corporate expenses for elected members.

| <b>Financial Year</b> | <b>Subscription</b> | <b>Events</b> | <b>Staff Time (inc. on costs)</b> | <b>Accommodation/ Expenses</b> | <b>Total</b>   |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>2026/27</b>        | £11,538             | -             | -                                 | -                              | £11,538        |
| <b>2025/26</b>        | £11,311             | £1,734        | £1,946                            | £1,088                         | £16,079        |
| <b>2024/25</b>        | £11,311             | £1,701        | £1,879                            | £1,643                         | £16,534        |
| <b>2023/24</b>        | £11,311             | £2,065        | £2,504                            | £1,392                         | £17,272        |
| <b>2022/23</b>        | £11,090             | £1,689        | £1,750                            | £1,284                         | £15,813        |
| <b>2021/22</b>        | £10,872             | -             | -                                 | -                              | £10,872        |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>£67,433</b>      | <b>£7,189</b> | <b>£8,079</b>                     | <b>£5,407</b>                  | <b>£88,108</b> |

*Table 1: Subscription and associated costs for LGA membership, note subscription for 2026/27 paid in April 2026*

- 4.2 The Council will accrue savings from 2027/2028, subject to exiting the membership agreement with the LGA.

## **5. Legal & Governance**

- 5.1. The LGA Articles of Association sets out the conditions of payment for membership as below.
- 5.1.1 Any Member Authority wishing to terminate its individual membership of the Association... shall give not less than twelve months' notice in writing to the Chief Executive to expire on 31 March in any year. [ ] At the expiration of the period of notice the Member Authority giving notice shall cease to be a Member Authority and shall become a Past Member Authority.
- 5.2 The membership cycle for the LGA is not concurrent with the elections cycle and therefore is not aligned to a political change in leadership and direction. Officers are therefore engaged with the LGA to seek early release from the association, noting that a payment had been made in 2026 ahead of the May elections.

## **6. Supporting Information**

- 6.1. None