

Queen's Speech Briefing 2016

This briefing contains a summary of key points for local government and Solace members raised by Her Majesty in the annual Queen's speech to both Houses of Parliament. See below for further details categorised by sector.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND HOUSING

Local Growth and Jobs Bill

The Queen has announced new legislation that will allow local authorities to retain 100% of their business rates. The Government intends put in place the framework for the delivery of the scheme, and legislate for the set of responsibilities that will be devolved to local authorities as a result of the reforms.

The Bill would also strengthen local areas' ability to reduce the business rates tax rate and give the ability to combined authority mayors to levy a supplement on business rates bills to fund new infrastructure projects, provided they have the support of the business community through the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The Queen has announced new legislation aimed to support the economic recovery and to create more jobs and apprenticeships. This Bill will aim to further empower communities to plan the homes and infrastructure in their local areas, drive more effective and efficient delivery of housing and infrastructure and make the process clearer, faster and fairer.

The Government also intends to support long term economic growth through an overarching and independent assessment of the long-term infrastructure needs of the country, with the aim to further strengthen neighbourhood planning, making the local government duty to support groups more transparent and improving the process for reviewing and updating plans. The Bill will aim to ensure that pre-commencement planning conditions are only imposed by local planning authorities where they are absolutely necessary, and that the legislation would tackle the overuse, and in some cases, misuse of certain planning conditions, and thereby ensure that development, including new housing, can get underway without unnecessary delay. It will also aim to make the compulsory purchase order process clearer, fairer and faster for all those involved.

The Government is intending to establish the independent National Infrastructure Commission on a statutory basis, which would provide expert, independent advice on infrastructure issues by setting out a clear, strategic vision on the future infrastructure that is needed to ensure the UK economy is fit for 2050.

The new legislation would also enable the privatisation of Land Registry, which would support the delivery of a modern, digitally-based land registration service that will benefit the Land Registry's customers, such as people buying or selling their home.

Bus Services Bill

The Queen has also announced new legislation which aims to give elected mayors and local transport authorities the power to improve bus services and mayoral combined authorities would be given London-style powers to franchise local services. Under the measures in this Bill, local authorities would be able to use new powers to set required standards of service with bus providers, including branding, ticketing and the frequencies of services.

In addition, data about routes, fares and times would be made available across the country to app developers to give passengers better information about how to make the most of local bus services.

Modern Transport Bill

The Queen has set out new legislation which aims to ensure the UK is at the forefront of technology for new forms of transport, including autonomous and electric vehicles. This is aimed at reducing congestion, making the use of our roads, railways and airspace more efficient. This Bill would also put the UK at the forefront of autonomous and driverless vehicles ownership and use.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Children and Social Work Bill

The Queen has announced new legislation aimed to ensure that children can be adopted by new families without delay, tipping the balance in favour of permanent adoption where that is the right thing for the child, and to improve opportunities for young people in care in England. This Bill intends to ensure that children leaving care make a good start in adult life, through a new 'Care Leavers' Covenant' underpinned by a statutory duty requiring local authorities to publish the services and standards of treatment care leavers are entitled to.

The Bill will also drive improvements in the social work profession by introducing more demanding professional standards and setting up a specialist regulator for the profession. The Government hopes the Bill will give frontline services more freedom to work together to safeguard children and trial innovative approaches to deliver more effective care.

In terms of children's safeguarding, the Bill aims to secure better protection of children by ensuring that lessons are learned from serious safeguarding cases, whilst also supporting

innovation in children's social care by allowing local authorities to pilot new, innovative approaches.

Education for All Bill

The Queen has set out new legislation that will be brought forward to lay foundations for educational excellence in all schools, with the aim to achieve a fairer balance between schools, through a National Funding Formula which would allocate funding fairly and efficiently.

This announcement, part of the Government's plan to move towards a system where all schools are academies, will convert schools to academies in under-performing local authorities and those that can no longer viably support their remaining schools, making the process of becoming an academy swifter and smoother.

The Government is also proposing fundamental reforms to alternative provision for excluded pupils and reforms to technical education through a strong employer-led system with high quality qualifications which support clear line of sight to skilled employment.

Higher Education and Research Bill

The Queen has announced that new legislation will be introduced to support the establishment of new universities and to promote choice and competition across the higher education sector by making it easier for new, high quality universities to set up.

The Government intends to cement the UK's position as a world leader on the research and innovation stage and maximise its investment in research and innovation. The Bill would make sure the UK research and innovation system is sufficiently strategic and agile to meet future challenges, and would deliver national capability that drives discovery and growth.

National Citizen Service Bill

The Queen has announced that the National Citizen Service (NCS) will be placed on a permanent statutory footing, expanding the NCS by encouraging young people to take advantage of the skill-building programmes offered and strengthening links between young people and schools, local governments and central governments to promote participation in the programme. This legislation will place duty on local authorities, as well as all secondary schools, including academies, sixth-form colleges and independent schools, to inform young people and parents about NCS, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

NHS (Overseas Visitors Charging) Bill

The Queen has announced that the Government will continue work to deliver NHS services over seven days of the week in England and new legislation will be introduced to ensure that overseas visitors pay for the health treatment they receive at public expense.

This legislation will extend the rules on charging migrants and overseas visitors for NHS treatment and implement tighter residency rules to ensure that only UK residents who live here lawfully and make a financial contribution to this country will get free NHS care.

The Bill includes measures that would ensure cost recovery is effective and efficient and the full cost of care is recovered and can be put back into the NHS, whilst also extending the number of services for which the NHS can charge overseas visitors and migrants. This would mean that fewer people coming to the UK from the EEA are eligible for free NHS healthcare. Further details will be brought forward when the Bill is published.

Soft Drinks Industry Levy

The Queen has announced that the Government will introduce a Soft Drinks Industry Levy which will be included in the Finance Bill 2017, targeted at producers and importers of soft drinks that contain added sugar from April 2018. The legislation will aim to encourage companies to reformulate by reducing the amount of added sugar in the drinks they sell, moving consumers towards lower sugar alternatives, and reducing portion sizes.

As part of efforts to tackle childhood obesity, the Government will invest the revenue from the levy in giving school-aged children a brighter and healthier future, as the first step in this Government's comprehensive national childhood obesity strategy that will be published in full later this year. A consultation will be held in due course on the technical details of the tax.

In England, revenue from the soft drinks industry levy will be used to increase the primary school PE and sport premium to £320 million per year from September 2017; provide up to £285 million a year to give 25% of secondary schools increased opportunity to extend their school day to offer a wider range of activities for pupils, including more sport; and provide £10 million funding a year to expand breakfast clubs in up to 1,600 schools starting from September 2017.

CIVIL RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Prison and Courts Reform Bill

The Queen has announced one of the biggest reforms of the prison system since Victorian times. This Bill is intended to give prison Governors unprecedented freedoms and enable

them to ensure prisoners receive better education, healthcare and security, while old and inefficient prisons will be closed and new institutions built where prisoners can be put more effectively to work.

New freedoms will be backed with a new regime of transparency aimed to hold governors to account, as prisons are required to produce statistics on areas such as prisoner education, reoffending and employment on release. The Government also aims to reform the courts and tribunals to ensure delivery of faster and fairer justice for users by making better use of technology and modernising working practices.

Legislation will be used to extend these freedoms much further, enabling prisons to be established as independent legal entities with the power to enter into contracts, to generate and retain income and to establish their own boards with external expertise. This is aimed to become the biggest structural reform of the prisons system for more than a century.

Policing and Crime Bill

The Queen has announced that this legislation, continuing from the 2015/2016 session of Parliament, will aim to strengthen the capability and accountability of the police service in England and Wales. It is intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces, including through closer collaboration with other emergency services, and to enhance the democratic accountability of police forces and fire and rescue services. While there are some good examples of joint working around the country, the picture is patchy and there is considerable scope for doing more.

The Bill would also simplify the complaints system and make reforms to the police disciplinary regime to increase transparency and independence. Moreover, in order to address the current over-reliance on the use of police cells as 'places of safety' when dealing with people experiencing a mental health crisis, the Bill bans the use of police cells as places of safety for under-18-year-olds.

Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill

The Queen has announced that new legislation will be introduced to prevent radicalisation, tackle extremism in all its forms, and promote community integration. This Bill aims to provide stronger powers to disrupt extremists and protect the public and ensure the Government and law enforcement agencies have a full range of powers to deal with extremism.

The measures in the Bill include the introduction of a new civil order regime to restrict extremist activity, following consultation. It will aim to safeguard children from extremist adults by taking powers to intervene in intensive unregulated education settings which

teach hate and drive communities apart and through stronger powers for the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The Government will consult on powers to enable government to intervene where councils were not able to tackle extremism and consider the need for further legislative measures following Louise Casey's review into integration in those communities most separated from the mainstream.

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

Digital Economy Bill

The Queen has announced that new measures will be brought forward to create the right for every household to access high speed broadband and make the United Kingdom a world leader in the digital economy. The purpose of the Bill is to enable the building of world-class digital infrastructure including fast broadband and mobile networks; support new digital industries; reform the way government uses data to deliver public services; and strengthen protections for citizens in the digital world.

The Government is intending to consult on better sharing of publically-held data sets to improve service delivery whilst maintaining safeguards on privacy and introducing new powers for public authorities to share information to combat the public sector fraud.

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Bill of Rights

The Queen has announced that the Government will bring forward proposals for a British Bill of Rights. This reform will aim to modernise Britain's human rights legal framework and restore common sense to the application of human rights laws. It would also protect existing rights, which are an essential part of a modern, democratic society, and provide better protection against abuse of the system and misuse of human rights laws. These rights would be based on those set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, while also taking into account our common law tradition. The government will consult fully on the proposals when they are published in due course.

Wales Bill

The Queen has announced that new legislation will be brought forward in order to deliver a clearer, more stable devolution settlement for Wales and devolve important new powers to the National Assembly for Wales over energy, transport and elections in Wales, giving the National Assembly for Wales control over its own affairs, including what it should be called, its size, electoral system and voting age.

The Bill would introducing a reserved powers model to clarify the division of powers between the National Assembly for Wales and Westminster; reflect the permanence of the Assembly and the Welsh Government in statute; and remove the requirement in the Wales Act 2014 for a referendum before a proportion of income tax is devolved.

For more information, see the Queen's Speech in full [here](#) and the Government's Queens Speech 2016 background notes [here](#)