

A blue-tinted background image of a city skyline with various skyscrapers and buildings. The text is overlaid on this image.

# Redesigning Local Government: Lawyers at the Centre of Change

## LLG CONFERENCE 2026

### A Profession at the Heart of Change

Local government lawyers and governance officers in England and Wales are operating in an **unusually complex and fluid environment**.

The pressures — and opportunities — extend far beyond the delivery of legal services. They arise from **structural reform, financial stress, political volatility** and **rapidly evolving case law**.

To be the best lawyer you can be, you must understand law in the context of an **ever-changing local government sector**.

**The 2026 Spring Conference is your window to the wider world**

## **PROGRAMME A: BELMONT SUITE (GROUND FLOOR)**

### **09.45 - 09.55 Seating for the Conference Opening & Conference Notices**

Speaker: Deborah Evans, LLG CEO

### **09.55 - 10.15 Conference Opening and Welcome**

Speaker: Helen Bradley, LLG President

### **10.15 - 10.45 Redesigning for Resilience: Shaping the Future of Local Government Together**

This session explores how local government can respond with confidence and creativity to a rapidly changing political and geopolitical landscape. We will reflect on recent events, unpack emerging reforms in law and governance, and invite the sector to shape what comes next. At its heart is a recognition that redesign is not just structural—it is cultural. When systems shift, so must mindsets. Together, we will consider how adaptability, shared purpose, and resilience enable not just survival, but renewal.

Speakers: Deborah Evans, CEO, LLG  
Helen Bennett, Executive Director of Policy & Governance, LLG

### **10.45 - 11.30 Leading Through Change: Culture, Conduct and Confidence in Transition & Reorganisation**

This session will explore how local government leaders can manage uncertainty, maintain resilience, and build healthy organisational culture during periods of significant change. It will look at the experience of both staff and members, focusing on wellbeing, conduct, governance, and leadership. The panel will discuss how to preserve core capacity and standards during transition, how to respond to challenging or competitive behaviours, and how to set new organisations up for success from day one.

Panel: Jonathan Goolden, Wilkin Chapman Rollits  
Estelle Culligan, Wilkin Chapman Rollits  
Alexis Powell-Howard, Fortis Therapy & Training  
Owen Mapley, Chief Executive, CIPFA

### **11.30 - 12.15 REFRESHMENT BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

### **12.15 - 13.00 Building New Towns: Sustainable Growth and the Legal Frameworks**

A discussion providing practical insight into how lawyers can help shape governance structures and planning agreements that support the creation of resilient, low-carbon communities, exploring the legal frameworks and regulatory tools needed to deliver environmentally and socially sustainable large-scale developments.

Speakers: Jessica Arczynski, Trowers & Hamlins  
Lucy Webb, Inner Circle Consulting

### **13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

#### **14.00 - 14.45 Devolution in practice**

Explore how the shifting of powers and funding from central government to local authorities has worked on the ground in West Midlands Combined Authority - a mayoral combined authority —looking at the opportunities and challenges created for councils, communities, and local economies. The discussion offers practical insights into what effective devolution looks like in everyday operations and what still needs to change to make it work better.

Speakers: Helen Edwards, West Midlands Combined Authority  
Kieran Stockley, West Midlands Combined Authority  
Tiffany Cloynes, Capsticks  
Rebecca Gilbert, Capsticks  
Megan Tam, Capsticks

#### **14.45 - 15.30 Ethics for In-House Lawyers**

This session gives an overview of the Law Society's ethical framework for in-house lawyers, focusing on how core principles apply in complex organisational settings. It will explore professional independence, integrity, accountability and managing conflicts while working as both a lawyer and an employee.

Speakers: Sharon Bridglalsingh, Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer, Milton Keynes Council  
Dr Jim Baxter, Professional Ethics Consultancy Team Leader, IDEA, The Ethics Centre, University of Leeds

#### **15.30 - 16.15 REFRESHMENT BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

#### **16.15 - 17.00 Evolving & modernising regulatory practice of a key function - Taxis, private hire & local government**

What happens when a law is out of date, is changed in a way that brings local authorities into conflict with each other and service users and then, as the Council in the eye of the storm, you seek assistance in reviewing what may be done about it and the Government invites you to present to a Parliamentary Select Committee?

This is what happened to Wolverhampton City Council about private hire licensing. This is a subject that goes far beyond the world of licensing and impacts on the approach to:

- the revision of out of date local government law
- the Government's approach to updating and deregulating
- addressing inter-council working friction
- what to do about seeking to modernise and integrate the old with the new
- engaging with Parliament and Government at the moment and going forward

Speakers: David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, Wolverhampton City Council  
Shamsher Zada, Deputy Director of Governance, Wolverhampton City Council  
Phil McCourt, Bevan Brittan  
Kirtpal Kaur Aujla, Bevan Brittan



## **PROGRAMME B: ASHSTEAD MEETING ROOM 2 (FIRST FLOOR)**

### **10.45 - 11.30 The Future of Planning**

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill brings some of the most sweeping reforms for decades and blurs the lines between central and local government decision making. But what does it mean for your local authority and where does the balance of decision-making lie?

Speakers: Matthew Reed KC, Landmark Chambers  
Stuart Evans, Anthony Collins  
Emma Ottewell, Chief Planning Officer, Rotherham MBC

### **11.30 - 12.15 REFRESHMENT BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

### **12.15 - 13.00 PFI Contract Expiry & Handback**

The session will cover the common commercial, legal and contractual issues organisations face in the built up to and on expiry as well as offer legal and practical solutions and tips to effectively manage the handback of PFI contracts as well as the transition process.

Speakers: James Millar, P2G  
Nick Moss, WBD

### **13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

### **14.00 - 14.45 Procurement Changes One Year On...**

What practical lessons have emerged during the first year of the new procurement regime? How are contracting authorities are adapting to the new procedures, transparency requirements, and digital systems, as what is the impact on supplier engagement? The session will cover early experiences of managing the transition, highlighting both benefits and ongoing challenges such as capability, compliance, and market response and look at emerging best practice.

Speaker: Anja Berero, Browne Jacobson

### **14.45 - 15.30 LGR - connecting people, policy and process (to vesting day and beyond!)**

Surfacing the challenges that legal teams will face through LGR and providing a tactical toolkit on how to leverage your case management and legal tech to ease that transition.

Speakers: Michael Graham, Independent Head of Legal  
Tanya Corsie, Iken

### **15.30 - 16.15 REFRESHMENT BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

### **16.15 - 17.00 The National CSE Inquiry**

The National CSE Inquiry is coming. As soon as the government appointed Baroness Longfield, the Inquiry began.

It may not have contacted your Authority yet, and it will only be a few authorities, but those it looks at will be seriously affected. It will reach into the heart of Children's Services and uncover multiple failings wherever it goes. Any authority that thinks the Inquiry might look at it, should act now to preserve its position. The risks of failing to do so are enormous.

This session will look at the CSE Inquiry, and how to engage constructively. It will inform delegates and provide the tools required to respond if the Inquiry approaches your authority. The Inquiry will also produce claims, so we will look at the latest developments in dealing with CSE cases.

This is a very difficult issue, and we will show delegates how to handle it fairly, ethically and effectively.

Speaker: Henry Bermingham, Weightmans

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## **PROGRAMME C: ASHSTEAD MEETING ROOM 1 (FIRST FLOOR)**

### **10.45 - 11.30 Soft Skills for Junior Lawyers**

This session focuses on the essential soft skills that underpin effective practice for junior lawyers. It will explore communication, confidence, time management, teamwork, and professional judgement, with a particular emphasis on working well with clients, colleagues and stakeholders. Practical guidance and real-life examples will help delegates develop self-awareness, build credibility, handle feedback constructively and navigate the workplace with confidence as they progress in their careers.

Speakers: Catherine Newman, Sharpe Pritchard  
Rachel Murray-Smith, Sharpe Pritchard

### **11.30 - 12.15 REFRESHMENT BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

#### **12.15 - 13.00 Adapting to your new administration**

A safe space conversation offering practical insight on navigating the transition to a new political administration, led by experienced practitioners who have lived through similar change. It will explore shifts in priorities, behaviours, and expectations, how legal teams can adapt quickly while preserving professional independence, and how to build effective relationships with new members. Drawing on real-world experience, the session will focus on supporting democratic decision-making and maintaining resilience, confidence and clarity.

Speakers: Helen Bradley, Director of Law & Governance, Durham County Council  
Claire Ward, Anthony Collins

### **13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

#### **14.00 - 14.45 How Not to Lose Your Sanity: Working with Vexatious Complainants**

Explore how to manage interactions effectively and lawfully with vexatious litigants, balancing access to justice with the need to protect staff time, public resources, and wellbeing. Practical examples will illustrate good practice, with a focus on supporting staff while ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance with legal and regulatory duties.

Speakers: Allison Cook, VVV  
Lisa Kirkman, VVV

#### **14.45 - 15.30 How can junior lawyers learn in an AI environment?**

How should legal teams balance the efficiency of AI-powered research tools with the need to develop strong foundational legal skills and embedded knowledge in junior lawyers? The session looks at strategies for using AI, along with supervising and training junior lawyers so they still engage critically with sources, understand legal reasoning, and build lasting subject-matter expertise rather than relying passively on automated outputs, ensuring the next generation of lawyers develops both technological fluency and robust legal understanding.

Speaker: Jessica Brown, Thomson Reuters

**15.30 - 16.15**

**REFRESHMENT BREAK: AFFINITY 2 EXHIBITION ROOM**

**16.15 - 17.00**

**Career Enhancement Tips for Junior Lawyers**

This interactive session is designed to support junior lawyers in confidently navigating the next stages of their legal careers. We will explore practical strategies to help you build a strong professional profile, secure meaningful experience, and identify clear pathways for progression.

Focusing on careers within local government, the session will highlight the key technical competencies, legal knowledge, and essential soft skills required to succeed in this sector.

There will also be guidance on how to take ownership of your career development, empowering you to make informed decisions, proactively seek opportunities, and drive your long-term professional growth.

Speakers: Emma Walker, Venn Group  
Connie Ross, Venn Group  
Tom Hault, Venn Group  
Jayne Middleton-Albooye, Consultant Governance Lawyer  
Kieran Stockley, West Midlands Combined Authority