

Research Briefing

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By Mark Sandford

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: progress of the bill



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Summary

The [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26](#) was introduced into the House of Commons on 10 July 2025. Second reading took place on 2 September 2025. Committee stage took place between 16 September and 28 October 2025. Report stage and third reading took place on 24 and 25 November 2025.

The bill, explanatory notes and associated documents [are available on the bill's page on the Parliamentary website](#). The House of Commons Library published a briefing on the bill, in advance of its second reading, on 20 August 2025.¹

This briefing sets out the main amendments made to the bill, and the main debates that took place, at second reading and committee stage in the House of Commons. It includes an introduction to the second reading debate. It then sets out amendments and debates at committee stage. These are mainly in chronological order but, where appropriate, details of debates on the same subject are grouped together. Section 8 covers debates on matters that are not in the bill at the time of writing.

The bill committee membership was appointed on [3 September 2025](#). The bill committee took evidence from external witnesses on 16 September 2025. It sat for five further days, totalling 12 sessions (two per day). Its final sitting was on 28 October 2025. This was some time before the 'out date': that is the final date on which the committee may sit, fixed by the motion committing the bill to a committee.²

Several elements were added to the Bill in the House of Lords, including provisions for gambling impact assessments, local scrutiny committees, taxi licensing, statutory trusts and brownfield land.

Angela Rayner resigned as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 5 September 2025, three days after introducing the bill at second reading. Subsequently, Steve Reed was appointed as her replacement. The government's ministerial team was also entirely replaced. Jim McMahon had been minister for devolution up to 5 September: he was replaced by Miatta Fahnbulleh, who spoke for the government during the rest of the bill's passage through Parliament.

¹ House of Commons Library, [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-25](#), 20 Aug 2025, no CBP 10319

² See [the Hansard record for 2 September 2025, column 259](#)

1

Second Reading

Angela Rayner, then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, introduced the bill's second reading:

This Bill will drive the biggest transfer of power in a generation out of Whitehall to our regions and communities and end the begging bowl, micro-managing culture. It will make devolution the default setting by: giving mayors new powers over planning, housing and regeneration to get Britain building as part of our plan for change; rebuilding local government, so that it can once again deliver good local services that people can rely on; and empowering local communities to have a bigger say in shaping their local area.³

For the Opposition, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sir James Cleverly, said:

Centralisation is devolution. Whitehall diktat is community empowerment. The fact that the Bill does the opposite of what it claims is, as we set out in our reasoned amendment, why we cannot give it a free pass. This Bill sidelines communities. This Bill forces restructuring without consent. This Bill wastes money while families are facing higher bills because of Labour's mismanagement. This Bill disrupts and distracts councils from building the homes that local people need. Those are our objections.⁴

Mayors are gaining sweeping planning and transport powers without council consent or representation. Let me give an example: what if communities oppose punitive anti-driver proposals from a mayor in their local neighbourhoods? How can they make their voices heard? Who will win? Will it be the mayor who has been imposed upon them, or will it be the local communities? What will the accountability model be for those mayors? We can see nothing in the Bill about people holding their mayors accountable. There is no provision for meaningful scrutiny during the tenure of the mayoralty.⁵

For the Liberal Democrats, Vikki Slade MP said:

....what we see here is a Bill that centralises decision making, limits community influence and, because it leaves areas unsure of their future, risks deepening inequalities between regions. The White Paper promised mayors for all regions and community-led reorganisation, but the Bill provides powers to merge councils from Westminster and fails to strengthen the councils closest to people—our towns and parishes. It even allows councils that have directly rejected a combined authority to be forced into one with their neighbours.⁶

³ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#) c180

⁴ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c188

⁵ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c190

⁶ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c193

Contributions from other Members covered subjects such as standards and conduct, visitor levies and the constitution of the Greater London Authority. Many Members shared views about the impact of local government reorganisations in their areas, including views about what pattern of unitary authorities would be optimal. Members addressed the potential impact of the bill on planning applications and the effects of government housing targets.

Some Members addressed the government's policy of abolishing the committee system in local authorities. Reference was made to Sheffield and Bristol city councils, both of which introduced the committee system in the 2020s following a referendum.⁷ Subsequently, government amendments on this subject were tabled for report stage of the bill.

Sir James Cleverly's reasoned amendment to the bill was defeated by 367 votes to 167, and the bill was given a second reading by 365 votes to 164.

The government tabled a range of amendments to the bill at committee stage, which were all accepted. Most of these amendments made drafting amendments or clarifications, rather than substantive changes to the bill. Substantive amendments are set out in the sections below. The sections below are organised according to the main subjects of debate at committee stage.

1.1

Transport

Taxi licensing

James Frith MP (Lab, Bury North) said half of private hire taxis in Greater Manchester are licensed outside of that area, and asked whether the bill would be an opportunity to fix this.⁸ In response, then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Angela Rayner MP said separate legislation would be introduced on this matter.⁹

E-bike and e-scooter licensing

Micromobility refers to a range of small, lightweight vehicles, including bikes, e-bikes and scooters.¹⁰ Mike Reader (Lab) and Deirdre Costigan (Lab) noted issues with inconsiderate parking of e- scooters and e-bikes. Both highlighted the provisions in the bill that would give local authorities the power to be able to licence micromobility providers.¹¹

⁷ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c203

⁸ [HC Deb 2 September 2025 c181](#)

⁹ [HC Deb 2 September 2025 c181](#)

¹⁰ Local Government Association, [Shared micromobility within the UK](#), 5 January 2023

¹¹ [HC Deb 2 September 2025 c240](#)

1.2

Planning

At the bill's second reading in the Commons on 2 September 2025, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government outlined the “new planning powers” for strategic authorities. This includes:

- New planning powers to raise the mayoral community infrastructure levy “which has generated over £1 billion since 2012 in London”.
- New powers “which will mean that mayors can intervene in major strategic planning applications to unlock housing”.
- New duties “including to produce a local growth plan demonstrating how mayors plan to unlock growth through planning and house building”.

Opposition parties outlined concerns about the new powers and how they may affect local authorities and communities. Sir James Cleverly said: “Mayors are gaining sweeping planning and transport powers without council consent or representation”. Wendy Morton (Con) also commented on local authority scrutiny and decision making:

At the heart of this Government's attempted reform lies a democratic deficit where planning committees lose their powers; councillors may scrutinise but cannot decide; and local councils are diminished, while in their place a mayor is handed sweeping powers over planning, housing, infrastructure and even development orders. This is not devolution downwards to communities; it is centralisation.¹²

Martin Wrigley (Lib Dem) raised the point that the bill should work with communities under a ‘duty to co-operate’ arrangement:

This Bill must contain a statutory obligation to work with the most local and community-rooted bodies, which are our parish and town councils. A duty to co-operate must be put into the Bill...The Bill allows mayors to convene partners and request collaboration, but those are discretionary powers...There is no enforceable duty and no statutory requirement to co-operate, and this is a profound weakness.¹³

However, MPs such as Dr Becky Cooper (Lab) highlighted the necessity of strategic authorities when planning for housing:

Only at a regional level can we plan housing that meets our needs now and into the future: homes that are accessible for our older population, affordable for young families, and supported by infrastructure to create thriving, mixed communities...¹⁴

¹² Hansard, [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, second reading](#), 2 September 2025

¹³ Hansard, [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, second reading](#), 2 September 2025

¹⁴ Hansard, [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, second reading](#), 2 September 2025

1.3

Local growth plans

In the bill's second reading debate, several members spoke on clause 38 of the bill and the requirement for mayoral combined authorities (CAs) and combined county authorities (CCAs) to produce and publish local growth plans.

Emma Foody (Lab) spoke positively of this requirement, saying it would allow local authorities to create plans “showing where investment is needed most, so that Westminster can follow that lead” allowing the government to see “shared priorities in areas such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy and digital innovation”.¹⁵

James MacCleary (Lib Dem) referred to the potential administrative and financial burden this could create for local authorities, saying “powers are welcome, if they are funded” adding that the requirement to produce local growth plans “adds duties but at the moment without giving resources”.¹⁶

Ian Sollom (Lib Dem) spoke of the potential duplication of work by different bodies that could result from the requirement for local authorities to produce local growth plans. Sollom referred to the lack of co-ordination between plans produced by different bodies about which skills are needed locally, saying:

Strategic authorities must produce local growth plans, but there is no requirement for them to align with LSIPs [Local Skills Improvement Plans] or with Skills England workforce forecasting. We risk having three different bodies in each area producing conflicting skills priorities with no clear co-ordination mechanism. That is a recipe for confusion, waste and ultimately a failure to address the skills shortages that our economy desperately needs to resolve.¹⁷

1.4

Ban on upward-only rent reviews

During second reading, Sir James Cleverly criticised the government for not publishing an assessment of the proposal's impact on the commercial property market and lack of consultation, noting that tenancies for properties let by local authorities themselves would be affected.¹⁸

Vikki Slade supported the proposal saying businesses “should not be locked into rising costs when market conditions shift”.¹⁹

¹⁵ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025, c 213](#)

¹⁶ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025, c 231](#)

¹⁷ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025, c 213](#)

¹⁸ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025 c190](#)

¹⁹ [As above c196](#)

Alison Taylor (Lab) said the view that “upwards-only rent reviews are unfair” is simplistic. She said the proposal creates “uncertainty for the funding of property development” and criticised the fact the ban would apply to all commercial property, rather than be targeted towards high-street retail premises. She added “I do not believe that it is just upwards-only rent reviews that are preventing the regeneration of our towns and cities”.²⁰

²⁰ [As above cc197-198](#)

2

Strategic authorities: Structures and constitutional matters

2.1

Completing the map

Opposition parties introduced amendments challenging the basis on which the government proposed to use the powers in the bill to create additional strategic authorities. The government's policy is to 'complete the map' – that is, to ensure that all parts of England are covered by one or other form of strategic authority by the end of the 2024 to 2029 Parliament. Ultimately the powers for the government to create strategic authorities or mayoralities without local consent were left out of the bill (see below).

Vikki Slade, for the Liberal Democrats, introduced amendments to permit local authorities to apply for designation as single foundation strategic authorities, and to prevent the Secretary of State from being able to impose a mayor on a combined authority. As the bill stands, it is up to the Secretary of State to decide whether to designate a single unitary authority as a foundation strategic authority. The minister, Miatta Fahnbulleh, said:

...we will consider non-mayoral devolution arrangements for single local authorities on an exceptional basis where certain criteria are met. Designation is not intended as the end point; it is a stepping stone towards deeper devolution, which is what we hope will be the journey for all parts of the country. It is therefore most appropriate for the process to be initiated by the Secretary of State rather than the local authority. However, to be clear, the Secretary of State will not be able to designate a council as a foundation strategic authority unless the council itself consents to that designation.²¹

Miatta Fahnbulleh also stated that the government planned only to use the 'backstop' power to impose a mayor sparingly:

We do not expect to use it, which is why it does not come into force at Royal Assent; it is there if we need to draw on it. The only reason it is there—because we think the demand and the momentum created by devolution will do the job for us—is in the instance where there are blockages. That means when constituent authorities that want to move forward are being resisted by a particular authority, we give ourselves the ability to intervene.²²

The amendment was rejected by 11 votes to 3.²³

²¹ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c105

²² PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c106

²³ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c107

The House of Lords agreed a series of amendments that would remove the Secretary of State's power to direct the formation of a combined authority without the consent of the local authorities it would cover, and to make certain governance changes to a combined authority without its consent.²⁴

The Commons sought to reinstate these provisions at ping pong. However, the powers for the Government to direct the creation of combined authorities were ultimately left out of the Bill as passed. Ministerial powers to direct the addition of an area to a combined authority will remain in place, though Baroness Taylor committed to not commencing those powers for at least four years after the passage of the act.²⁵

Cornwall

Cornwall was mentioned in this context several times at committee stage. Cornwall's distinctive cultural and linguistic inheritance is protected under the [Framework Convention for the Rights of National Minorities](#). During the 2000s a Cornish Constitutional Convention and a Campaign for a Cornish Assembly sought devolution, roughly on the previous Welsh model.

Cornwall is now governed by a single unitary authority. The government's policy is to offer the strongest form of devolution to mayoral strategic authorities. These must be combined authorities with more than one local authority member. This means that Cornwall could only access the strongest form of devolution as part of a larger authority with a mayoralty, likely partnered with Devon.²⁶

At second reading, Perran Moon (Lab, Falmouth & Camborne) suggested that membership of the Framework could constitute a case for treating Cornwall distinctly within the bill:

In 2016, when passing comment on the then Government's plans for redrawing boundaries, the Council of Europe advisory committee on the framework convention highlighted

"that Article 16 prohibits restricting the enjoyment of the rights of the Framework Convention in connection with the redrawing of borders."

In the Bill as drafted, Cornwall is prevented from accessing the highest level of devolution, because to do so would require us to compromise our national minority status. During the passage of the Bill, I will work with the Government to ensure that the Bill as passed respects Cornish national minority status.²⁷

During the external evidence session at committee stage, Miatta Fahnbulleh addressed this issue:

²⁴ [HL Deb 24 Mar 2026](#) c1407-8

²⁵ [HL Deb 28 Apr 2026](#) c1137

²⁶ For further information, see [the written evidence submitted to the bill committee by Cornwall Council](#).

²⁷ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c212

The conversation that we want to have with Cornwall is: “If you want to drive growth and employment opportunities, and if you want to create jobs in your area, what is the best geography to do that in?” That is not to deny Cornwall’s uniqueness and specialness, which I think every single Committee member recognises and appreciates, but it is to say that if our objective is to make sure we are delivering for your community in Cornwall, what is the best spatial strategy to do that? That might require collaboration beyond the boundaries of Cornwall.²⁸

At a later point at committee stage, Perran Moon then said:

I have had several conversations with Ministers and am satisfied with the Government’s assurances at this stage that Cornwall will receive a devolution arrangement that allows us to access the highest level of devolution without the requirement to join a mayoral combined authority, and that the recognition that we live on a multinational island will be protected.²⁹

The committee rejected three amendments that would have prevented Cornwall from being placed in a combined authority alongside another local authority.³⁰

Vikki Slade introduced a new clause that would have permitted regulations to establish a ‘regional governance body’. This could be done in any area of England, having regard for the “identity and aspirations” of the people and the “principle of subsidiarity”. This amendment did not mention Cornwall specifically, but much of the debate on the amendment focused on Cornwall. Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

One model proposes that the best place is large regional blocs, while another model says that functional geographies around city and county regions are better placed to drive that. The large regional blocs model was tested with the regional development agencies, and we found that the connection to the local economy was weaker. Critically, the democratic link to people in those places was weaker. That is why the model did not endure, and why, unfortunately, the Conservatives undid all the good work that we did when we were last in power. Our strong view is that strategic, functional geography—city and county regions—is the best place to make decisions around transport, housing and planning, skills and travel-to-work areas. That is why we are conferring powers at that level.³¹

The committee rejected the new clause by 9 votes to 3.³²

²⁸ [PBC Deb 16 Sep 2025](#), c87

²⁹ [PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025](#), c129

³⁰ [PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025](#), c136-8

³¹ [PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025](#), c566

³² [PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025](#), c567

2.2

Strategic authority budgeting

The government introduced various amendments impacting on budgetary matters at committee stage in the House of Commons, all of which were accepted.

Amendment 62 provided that, in a non-mayoral combined authority, the budget and the transport levy must be approved unanimously by all member authorities. Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

...in the White Paper, we also said that key strategic decisions would require unanimity in non-mayoral authorities. The budget for the authority is one of those decisions.³³

The transport levy is a power available to some combined authorities at present, and it will be available to all combined authorities if the bill passes. It permits a combined authority to require its constituent authorities to pass specified sums in transport funding to the combined authority, to fund its transport functions.

Three further government amendments impact on the precepting power available to strategic authority mayors. At present, these mayors have the power to set a precept on residents' council tax. Mayors with Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) responsibilities may also set a 'PCC precept', which must be ring-fenced and spent on PCC responsibilities.

Amendment 82 allowed mayors to spend funding from precepts on any function of the combined authority, instead of solely on functions that are defined as mayoral functions. For the Conservatives, David Simmonds expressed some reservations about this change:

...clearly the measures will open the door to very substantial tax rises through the vehicle of the mayoral precept. Worse than that, they open it up to being used for any purpose, in effect. ... The Bill opens up the scope for mayors to directly tax people for the purposes of environmental legislation, or social care, which consumes around 70% of the budgets of local authorities, or any other function that authorities may choose to undertake... despite the fact that those are not functions that mayors undertake by statute.³⁴

The committee rejected Mr Simmonds' amendment by 11 votes to three. The committee also rejected, by 10 votes to three, a new clause tabled by Mr Simmonds, which sought to tie the referendum thresholds for mayoral council tax to those of upper-tier authorities.³⁵

The committee accepted amendments 78, 80 and 81, which would permit the government to establish separate components for mayoral precepts. This

³³ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025, c121-2

³⁴ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c168

³⁵ PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025 c546-8. See the Library research briefing [Council tax: local referendums](#) for more detail about referendum thresholds on council tax rises by mayors and local authorities.

would lead to the government determining how different quantities of the mayoral precept should be spent. Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

This gives Ministers the option to direct how precept spending on non-police and crime functions is accounted for, by setting this out clearly in secondary legislation. In doing so, they will be able to ensure that the precept is accounted for in ways that best reflect how the precept should be spent—whether that means allowing for full flexibility across the non-police and crime component, or ringfencing money to be used for certain functions.³⁶

At present, the government cannot direct how precepts are spent by the authorities that set them. As well as combined authorities, county councils, PCCs, fire and rescue authorities and parish councils can all set precepts. The power in this amendment would only affect mayoral combined authorities (the amendment does not cover the Greater London Authority).

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

Government policy, as expressed in the December 2024 white paper, is to pass PCC responsibilities to elected mayors wherever boundaries align. If two or more PCC areas align with an elected mayorality, the mayor could become PCC for both areas. The only mayorality to which this could apply at present is the East Midlands. In this event, amendment 77 provides that separate precepts must be set for the different PCC areas.

The government then announced on 13 November 2025 that it planned to abolish PCCs. This change will take effect at the end of the current PCCs' term, in 2028. Where possible, the PCC role will be transferred to the mayor. Elsewhere, joint boards will be established comprising upper-tier local authority leaders, mayors, and independent members.³⁷ Police and Crime Panels, which scrutinise PCCs, are also to be abolished. The Home Secretary said:

We are absolutely clear that these boards will not be a return to the bureaucratic and invisible committee-based oversight of policing that existed before the establishment of PCCs. We will ensure that council leaders are empowered to exercise police governance functions. Boards will be supported by a policing and crime lead, akin to a deputy mayor for policing and crime, to carry out day-to-day activities on their behalf. This will mean that every area will have a visible, nominated lead who will be dedicated to the oversight of policing in their area.³⁸

Capacity funding

Miatta Fahnbulleh confirmed at committee stage that all areas on the Devolution Priority Programme would receive £1 million in capacity funding in the current financial year.³⁹ These are areas scheduled to elect a mayor for

³⁶ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c171

³⁷ [HCDeb 13 Nov 2025](#) c334&ff

³⁸ As above, c335

³⁹ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c118

the first time in 2026 and 2027.⁴⁰ Ms Fahnbulleh said that the new institutions “will also receive capacity funding in future years, so that they are ready and prepared to deliver the benefits that we believe devolution will unlock”.⁴¹

Multi-year settlements

In a further debate, Miatta Fahnbulleh stated that the government’s intention is to provide multi-year financial settlements for combined authorities.⁴² The government is providing a three-year financial settlement for local authorities, running from 2026 to 2029.

Tracy Brabin, mayor of West Yorkshire, during oral evidence to the bill committee, noted some of the benefits of removing ring-fences around funding, and of the drawbacks arising from a lack of distinct capacity funding:

For Members’ understanding, the organisation is funded from top-slicing of projects, so there is a real desire from mayors to have dedicated funding to run the organisation—for example, your legal or HR departments. Everything is top-sliced from projects. That is not necessarily the most sustainable or strategic way to fund an organisation.⁴³

If I could just make the case for mayors and police and crime commissioners, we have had so many amazing opportunities because of those two responsibilities—the teaming and ladling of responsibilities and moneys, and being able to have a strategic police and crime plan. ...The ability to bring together those responsibilities in a Venn diagram gives us really great outcomes.

One example is using money from the apprenticeship levy share scheme that would have gone back to Whitehall. We have kept some of that money in the region, including £1 million from Morrisons, to train up 15 PCSOs to go on my bus network and in bus stations, so that we can target my safety of women and girls plan. That opportunity is a gift.⁴⁴

Ben Houchen, the mayor of Tees Valley, suggested in oral evidence that a strengthened model of the ‘integrated settlement’ should be made available to combined authorities:

The key question that needs to be answered is how you get the combined authority to have an accountable officer within the organisation. Where I think combined authorities should get to is being treated as geographical Departments. We should be treated in the same way as a Department, bidding into Budgets and spending reviews, with our full, eclectic mix—from housing to transport and everything in between—and we should be accountable directly to the Treasury.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ These are Hampshire and Solent; Sussex and Brighton; Greater Essex; Norfolk and Suffolk (2026); Cheshire and Warrington; Cumbria (2027).

⁴¹ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c118

⁴² PBC Deb 21 Oct 2025 c334

⁴³ [PBC Deb 16 Sep 2025](#), c40

⁴⁴ [PBC Deb 16 Sep 2025](#), c464

⁴⁵ [PBC Deb 16 Sep 2025](#), c42-3

Professor John Denham, of the University of Southampton, also argued for greater autonomy of financial decision-making for local areas, including proposing a local public accounts committee to scrutinise spending:

You have to create a new local institution, the local public accounts committee and, picking up on what Mayor Houchen said earlier, make the chief executive within the area the local accounting officer. So you have a complete audit model at local level that is not then channelled upwards through departmental accounting officers. I think that is what we need to work towards. Those two things would not only empower local people, but ensure that you have local scrutiny of what is being spent and what is being done with their money.⁴⁶

2.3

Strategic authority constitutional matters

Areas of competence

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage introduced an amendment to add ‘culture’ to strategic authorities’ areas of competence, set out in clause 2. This was agreed at report stage in the House of Lords.⁴⁷ This brings the total number of areas of competence to eight.

Baroness Bakewell introduced a further amendment to add ‘rural affairs’ to the list of mayoral competences. The Lords agreed to this at report stage, by 285 votes to 156.⁴⁸ For the Government, Baroness Taylor argued that the bill was:

...intended to equip mayors and strategic authorities with the powers that they need to support communities across their entire areas. That is why the areas of competence are deliberately broad. This allows a wide range of activity to fall within scope. In this way, rural issues are already reflected in, for example, “transport and local infrastructure; ... housing and strategic planning”, and “the environment and climate change”.⁴⁹

The Commons initially reversed this amendment at consideration but then accepted it, adding ‘coastal communities’ to ‘rural affairs’ as the ninth area of competence for strategic authorities.⁵⁰

Strategic authority commissioners

The bill originally permitted mayors to appoint up to seven ‘commissioners’ to whom they could delegate responsibilities. Commissioners would have to be appointed to a portfolio reflecting one of the areas of competence set out in clause 2 of the bill. Amendments were agreed in the Lords to make this system more flexible (see below). The system is akin to the Mayor of London’s ‘cabinet’: the Mayor of London can appoint up to 11 ‘deputy mayors’.

⁴⁶ [PBC Deb 16 Sep 2025](#), c71

⁴⁷ [HL Deb 26 Mar 2026](#) c1695

⁴⁸ [HL Deb 24 Mar 2026](#) c1392-4

⁴⁹ [HL Deb 24 Mar 2026](#) c1389

⁵⁰ [HC Deb 22 Apr 2026](#) c268-271; [HC Deb 27 Apr 2026](#) c603

Currently, combined authority mayors may only appoint one ‘political adviser’.

For the Liberal Democrats, Vikki Slade questioned the need for commissioners:

Some have suggested that there are not enough constituent council leaders in some areas... There may be a case for drawing from a broader pool, but suggesting that those people are not sufficiently qualified in understanding their area or area of expertise could damage the respect that council leaders have in their area, as well as the connection between a constituent council and the strategic authority that sits above it. If we want constituent councils to drive better strategic decisions and better strategic outcomes for all residents, it would be much more sensible to give those individuals a real role in the authority.⁵¹

Sam Carling (Lab) questioned whether the number of commissioners should vary in smaller combined authorities. For the Conservatives, David Simmonds asked whether any guidance regarding transparency, standards and conduct for commissioners would be issued.

Minister Miatta Fahnbulleh stated that the government “will provide further detail in statutory guidance on the selection and appointment of commissioners, as well as other operational matters that the combined authority or combined county authority will need to consider”.⁵² She also stated that no additional funding would be provided to pay commissioners.⁵³

Vikki Slade also expressed concerns about whether commissioners would be accountable for their actions:

If we bring in external individuals as commissioners, there will be few checks and balances; they are not democratically accountable. The mayor may well be able to remove them, as is detailed in the Bill, but the public cannot remove them. Fundamentally, the people who are making policy decisions should be able to be removed by the public.⁵⁴

In response, for the government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

...we completely agree on the need for accountability for commissioners. They will be accountable to the mayor for their performance, who has the power to terminate their appointment, and the combined authority or combined county authority must also agree before any non-mayoral functions are delegated to the commissioner. Critically, the combined authority or combined county authority overview and scrutiny committee will also have the power to recommend the termination of commissioners if they think the commissioner is not performing or delivering. A two-thirds majority of members of the authority is required to accept that recommendation.⁵⁵

⁵¹ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c152

⁵² PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c156

⁵³ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c151

⁵⁴ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c152

⁵⁵ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c156

Members noted that mayors have already appointed ‘commissioners’ in the past, such as Chris Boardman, previously a commissioner in Greater Manchester. However, to date these ‘commissioner’ roles have been advisory. They do not carry decision-making powers as proposed in the bill.

To date, mayors have often appointed local authority leaders to cabinet-style portfolio roles. This will still be possible under the bill. However, it has not been possible to pay an additional allowance to those who undertake this role. Clause 10 introduces a power for combined authorities to pay them, via a special responsibility allowance. This is equivalent to the way in which cabinet members in local authorities are paid for their role. One government amendment was accepted on commissioners. It would clarify the circumstances under which a commissioner’s appointment can end:

- if the appointment is invalid
- if the person becomes ineligible
- if the term of the appointment ends
- if the appointment is terminated or the commissioner dies.⁵⁶

Lords amendments to provisions for commissioners

Baroness Taylor introduced government amendments at report stage in the House of Lords that would:

- Increase the number of commissioners that a mayor could appoint from 7 to 10.
- Enable more than one commissioner could be appointed in any of the areas of competence set out in clause 2 of the bill. As originally drafted, only one commissioner could be appointed in respect of each of the areas of competence.
- Enable commissioners to be appointed in respect of parts of an area of competence. As originally drafted, the bill would only have allowed mayors to be appointed in respect of the whole of an area of competence.
- Ensure that a commissioner’s term of office ended at the same time as the mayor’s.

Baroness Taylor said:

This could mean, for instance, two commissioners operating within the transport and local infrastructure area of competence, with one focused on rural connectivity and the other on active travel. I emphasise that the ability to appoint up to 10 commissioners recognises that we expect the devolution framework to grow over time, thereby providing a contingency as mayoral duties and powers expand. It does not mean mayors frivolously appointing

⁵⁶ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c163

people based on patronage. We know that mayors want high-calibre individuals whom they can trust to help them deliver for their regions. Therefore, to bring in people with a track record of success, these appointments should be on merit.⁵⁷

These amendments were all agreed. The Lords also agreed amendment 45, from Baroness Scott, that placed requirements for commissioners to be appointed following a fair and open selection process on the face of the bill. This was agreed by 187 votes to 157.⁵⁸ The Commons disagreed to this amendment at ping pong.⁵⁹

Baroness Taylor noted that no extra funding would be provided for payment of commissioners. Strategic authorities would be able to pay commissioners an allowance: the mayor, strategic authority members, and overview and scrutiny committee members can also receive allowances.

The government published statutory guidance on the appointment of commissioners on 16 April 2026.⁶⁰ The guidance included provisions related to fair and open competition and other matters contained within amendment 45:

Commissioners should be appointed on merit, through fair and open competition. This means appointments must be advertised publicly by the C(C)A for an appropriate period, ensuring a broad range of candidates can be considered.⁶¹

The strategic authority's overview and scrutiny committee may hold a scrutiny hearing within 28 days of the mayor notifying them of the appointment. It must then provide a written response to the mayor. It can recommend that the mayor should not appoint a commissioner. The combined authority may accept this recommendation, and thus veto the appointment, with a 2/3 majority of the non-mayoral members of the authority.⁶² The guidance does not use the term 'confirmation hearing' to describe this process.

The guidance says that the process of open recruitment can be bypassed if a commissioner is appointed who "already holds a public or statutory role of comparable seniority and responsibility and ... the individual was appointed to that role following a robust, fair, and merit-based selection process, providing assurance equivalent to that of an open recruitment exercise".⁶³ This would, for instance, permit a mayor to appoint an individual who was a chair of an Integrated Care Board or a director of public health as a commissioner, without requiring open competition. The guidance says that if the criteria of merit have been met, "it is expected a scrutiny hearing will not be required".⁶⁴

⁵⁷ [HL Deb 24 Mar 2026](#) c1430

⁵⁸ [HL Deb 24 Mar 2026](#) c1434-6

⁵⁹ [HC Deb 22 Apr 2026](#) c268-271

⁶⁰ MHCLG, [Appointing mayoral commissioners and setting/reporting allowances](#), 16 Apr 2024

⁶¹ As above, paragraph 4

⁶² See schedule 3 paragraph 9 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026

⁶³ As above, paragraph 11

⁶⁴ As above, paragraph 12

Strategic authority functions are divided into mayoral and non-mayoral functions. Mayors will require the approval of the combined authority, by a majority vote, to delegate non-mayoral functions to a commissioner. This will not be required for mayoral functions.

Commissioners are to be known as ‘deputy mayors’ unless there is a compelling argument for a different title. The local authority representatives on the strategic authority will still be able to hold delegated functions, alongside commissioners, but they must have a title distinct from ‘deputy mayor’.⁶⁵

Commissioners are expected to be politically restricted – that is, they will not be able to undertake political activities.

A commissioner’s terms of appointment should provide for a level of political restriction akin to a statutory officer. This means commissioners should not undertake party-political activities. However, as a mayoral appointment, commissioners speak on behalf of the mayor provided this in the context of advancing the C(C)A’s policy agenda only, and subject to the terms of their appointment. This is a divergence from officers of the C(C)A who are expected to act impartially, and therefore cannot make political arguments.⁶⁶

The guidance also clarifies that a mayor can terminate a commissioner’s appointment in the event of ‘unacceptable behaviour’:

unacceptable behaviour ...does not necessarily need to have public or reputational impact to be of concern; it may be sufficient that the behaviour compromises the integrity, functioning, or values of the organisation”.⁶⁷

Fire and rescue authority changes

The committee accepted government amendments that would prevent a mayor from delegating certain fire and rescue functions to a commissioner. Similar restrictions exist regarding delegating certain PCC functions. Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

...certain functions should be the sole responsibility of an elected mayor, as head of the fire and rescue authority. The retained functions are those with the most significant bearing on the strategic direction of the fire service, such as its budget, its risk plan, and the appointment or dismissal of the chief fire officer.⁶⁸

Greater London Authority changes

Sian Berry, for the Green Party, introduced an amendment that would have removed the current requirements for a two-thirds ‘supermajority’ within the Greater London Authority. Currently the London Assembly can amend the Mayor’s budget or key strategy documents, but only with a two-thirds majority. The amendment would have replaced this requirement with a simple

⁶⁵ As above, paragraph 24

⁶⁶ As above, paragraph 65

⁶⁷ As above, paragraph 69

⁶⁸ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c158

majority. As the Assembly operates a system of proportional representation, the political effects of this change could be significant.

Peter Fortune (Con), spoke in favour of this change at second reading.⁶⁹ He also supported permitting the Assembly to call in mayoral decisions, which it cannot currently do. Sian Berry spoke in favour of introducing a requirement for the Mayor of London to publish a forward plan.⁷⁰ In local authorities, call-in and forward plans are two sides of the same coin, as local authority overview and scrutiny committees may call in decisions listed in the forward plan.

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

As a London MP, I think that model has worked well for London for well over 25 years. It is tested and it strikes the right balance between the executive authority of the mayor and the scrutiny of the Assembly. ... we will also be thinking about reforming the GLA to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century. We will take into consideration some of the points that have been made in this Committee.⁷¹

The committee rejected this amendment by nine votes to six.⁷²

Baroness Pidgeon reintroduced an amendment removing the requirement in the London Assembly for a two-thirds majority to amend the Mayor of London's budget. The Lords agreed to this amendment by 171 votes to 146.⁷³ This was later reversed at consideration of amendments.⁷⁴

During the debate, Baroness Scott asked whether decisions in strategic authorities would be taken by a simple majority. Until the bill becomes law, combined authorities require a two-thirds majority to veto or amend the mayor's budget.

After the bill becomes law, the default position for decision-making in combined authorities will be that decisions are taken by simple majority, but that the majority must include the mayor's vote. This will apply in future to the combined authority's budget.

However, in practice there are two budget processes in combined authorities: one for combined authority functions and an additional budget process for mayoral functions. A combined authority will still require a two-thirds majority to veto or amend the budget for mayoral functions. This provision is currently in the [Combined Authorities \(Finance\) Order 2017](#).

⁶⁹ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c199

⁷⁰ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c145

⁷¹ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c146

⁷² PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025, c569

⁷³ [HL Deb 26 Mar 2026](#) c1652-3

⁷⁴ [HL Deb 23 Mar 2026](#) c784-6

Disqualification of mayors as MPs

Clause 16 disqualifies an elected mayor from sitting as a Member of Parliament. The effect of the clause is that an MP who is elected as a mayor is disqualified from office in the House of Commons: their seat in the Commons becomes vacant automatically. It also establishes that a mayor would be required to relinquish their office if they were elected to the House of Commons. Members expressed some concern at the clause, and the committee voted to retain it in the bill by 11 votes to four.⁷⁵

Prior to this bill, an individual could have been an MP and a directly-elected mayor simultaneously. The individuals who have been strategic authority mayors and MPs at the same time are Ken Livingstone (2000-01), Boris Johnson (2015-16), Dan Norris (2024-25) and Dan Jarvis (2018-22).

The [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#) established that an individual cannot be an MP and a PCC, or a mayor with PCC responsibilities, simultaneously. Sian Berry expressed concern that clause 16 was unnecessarily restrictive:

...there have been overlapping periods when mayors of different combined authorities and London have also been MPs, either at the beginning or end of their term. That has been dealt with in a pragmatic way, with nobody overextending those kinds of double-hatted jobs. As I understand it, and I would like the Minister to clarify this, writing this rule into statute would mean that, while nobody would be prevented from campaigning to be a mayor or an MP while in either of these jobs, at the moment they are elected, the situation then becomes illegal. An instant resignation takes place on that day. There would be immense disruption across a wide area— perhaps not so much for one constituency, as we have got used to having by-elections for various reasons, but in holding a mayoral by-election.⁷⁶

For the government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

We are trying to create empowered mayors with huge responsibility over transport, housing, infrastructure and skills. That is a full-time job—bigger even, candidly, than that of an individual Minister. It is absolutely right that they should, if elected to do that job, be doing that job. Hon. Members have made important points about how we get the transition right in order not to have disruption. ...We will reflect on that and think about how we get the transition right.⁷⁷

Tracy Brabin was elected as mayor of West Yorkshire in 2021, while she was a sitting MP. This mayoralty includes PCC responsibilities. PCCs are required to sign the declaration of office as a PCC within two months of their election, otherwise their election becomes void. Ms Brabin resigned from the House of Commons during that two-month period, and was therefore able to sign the declaration of office.

⁷⁵ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c183

⁷⁶ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c180

⁷⁷ PBC Deb 14 Oct 2025 c183

The provisions in clause 16 state that an individual cannot ‘hold office’ as a mayor if they are a member of the House of Commons or of one of the devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Combined authority mayors are not required to sign a declaration of office.⁷⁸ In the past, the regulations and orders that established combined authorities have typically stipulated that a mayor’s term of office begins on the fourth day after they are elected. That means that, as a result of this clause, an MP would need to resign from the House of Commons before the fourth day after being elected as mayor, in order to take up the post of mayor.

The Lords accepted a government amendment that states that the disqualification provisions come into effect eight days after the mayoral term begins. This period is the same whether a mayor has been elected to a legislature or vice versa. This will permit an individual who holds one office, and is then elected to another, to choose between them.

2.4 The convening power

Clause 21 of the bill provides mayors with a formal power to invite local partner bodies to meetings. The power provides that the partner body must respond to the invitation. This comprises a formalising of the ‘convening power’. This ‘power’ encapsulates the idea that elected mayors can influence the priorities and decisions of other public bodies in the locality by virtue of their electoral mandate, profile and policy vision.

Clause 21 states that a convening invitation must relate to one of the areas of competence for strategic authorities set out in clause 2 of the bill. Vikki Slade introduced an amendment that would have widened the range of matters on which a mayor could issue a formal convening invitation:

We are concerned that the wording in clause 21 on the topics about which meetings can be convened is too narrow, as it is restricted to the items in clause 2. There should be an ability to convene meetings at a strategic level about matters that are not covered there, such as education. Where skills are within the remit of the strategic authority, and education remains the remit of the constituent parts, the impact and the opportunities available would be across the strategic area.⁷⁹

The government rejected this amendment.

Regulations are expected to define which organisations would be covered by the requirement to respond to a convening request under clause 20. In response to a question from Sam Carling, Miatta Fahnbulleh, for the government, said the requirement:

⁷⁸ Councillors are required to sign a declaration of office (see section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972). The provisions for PCCs are in section 70 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

⁷⁹ PBC Deb 16 Oct 2025 c194

...absolutely does apply to anchor organisations—the key people we would expect to have around the table for particular issues. We expect it to be private sector, although I think the power of direction might be a bit weaker for the mayor in that context...The experience of mayors has been that most of this is done voluntarily, because most partners in a place want to work together to deliver the outcome for their people. This provides an additional tool that the mayor can draw on in instances where, for whatever reason, partners are not automatically willing to come around the table.⁸⁰

Clause 20 does not prevent a mayor from convening organisations to discuss issues that lie outside a strategic authority's areas of competence. It simply means those organisations are not obliged to respond to the mayor's invitation.

2.5 Collaboration

Government amendments at Lords report stage altered several provisions within the bill to permit collaboration with local partners, and convening local partners, with regard to “any aspect of any area”. The same textual amendment was made in clause 54, which provides mayors’ ‘right to request’. Baroness Taylor, for the government, stated that the aim of the change was “avoiding ambiguity or an unnecessarily narrow interpretation of how these powers relate to the areas of competence”.⁸¹

Baroness Taylor also stated that the government would publish statutory guidance on the operation of the duty to collaborate.⁸²

Lord Bichard introduced an amendment that would have introduced a statutory duty for selected public service partners to co-operate with strategic authorities. This amendment was ultimately withdrawn, but Lord Bichard said that it:

... would send a very clear and necessary message that this Government expect to see collaboration between agencies, not competition. It would change the culture of our public sector entirely. It would show that the primary driver of public services must be to meet the needs of clients, citizens, customers or whatever you want to call them, not to serve for their own convenience or to enhance their own profile.

This amendment is supported by the Local Government Association, and I am given to understand that the Minister and the Secretary of State want to explore it further.⁸³

⁸⁰ PBC Deb 16 Oct 2025 c198

⁸¹ [HC Deb 26 Mar 2026](#) c1661

⁸² As above, c1673

⁸³ As above, c1664

2.6

Local scrutiny committees

Baroness Taylor introduced amendments 67 and 68 at Lords report stage. These made provision for a new institution of “local scrutiny committees”. These would replace overview and scrutiny committees in established mayoral strategic authorities from 2027, and in all strategic authorities from 2028.

Some of the powers of local scrutiny committees are identical to those available to overview and scrutiny committees, but some additional powers are also made available. The existing powers that will be available are:

- Investigating matters of local interest and reporting to the MSA
- Reporting on the discharge of mayoral or MSA functions
- Establishing sub-committees
- Power to summon members and officials of the MSA to attend its meetings
- A power to direct that a decision may not be implemented whilst the committee reviews it (call-in). The committee must publish details of how it will exercise this power, and this must be approved by the strategic authority itself.
- A requirement that a member of the MSA cannot be a member of a local scrutiny committee or any sub-committee

New powers include:

- A specific power to review the policy outcomes intended to result from MSA / mayoral actions, and the effectiveness of those actions in achieving the outcomes.
- A requirement to assess value for money when reviewing any action that involved spending by the MSA or mayor. This must include a value for money report with accompanying recommendations.
- A requirement that the assessment of value for money must have regard to any statutory guidance.
- A requirement for the mayor to write to the local scrutiny committee explaining why they will not accept a recommendation from it.
- A statement that the local scrutiny committee may not discharge any functions other than those set out in schedule 4 – that is, these functions cannot be assigned to a multi-purpose committee.
- Potential power to summon individuals from outside the strategic authority. The power of summons can be applied to ‘key persons’.

Regulations can extend the definition of ‘key persons’ to ‘a person of any description’.⁸⁴

The Secretary of State can make further regulations covering a range of matters. If made, regulations must include provision for:

- The involvement, use, and remuneration of independent experts by local scrutiny committees
- The remuneration of all members of a local scrutiny committee
- The appointment of a chair who is independent, or who is a councillor for a constituent council for a different party from that of the mayor
- 60% of members of the local scrutiny committee to be councillors from constituent authorities
- The strategic authority to appoint two statutory scrutiny officers

These committees must also be able to accept petitions, in paper or electronic form, on “a matter of local interest”.⁸⁵ Petitions that are offensive, vexatious, would prejudice existing or forthcoming legal proceedings, or that explicitly call for an increase in spending, must be rejected. If the petition has been signed by 0.1% of registered electors or more, the committee must make an explicit decision whether to investigate the subject matter. This percentage would equate to a number in the order of 2,000 electors for Greater Manchester, or to some 400 in a smaller strategic authority such as Tees Valley.

Regulations may also be made to enable these committees to impose civil penalties on individuals who fail to attend meetings, fail to provide documents, or fail to answer questions without reasonable excuse. The maximum penalty that can be provided for in regulations is £5,000. Regulations can apply this provision to ‘key persons’ from outside the strategic authority.

Mayors, deputy mayors and commissioners are disqualified from their position if they fail to attend six consecutive meetings of a local scrutiny committee, or they fail to attend six meetings in a twelve-month period, without reasonable excuse. The missed meetings can be of different local scrutiny committees, but the individual must have been invited to the missed meeting. This provision cannot apply to office-holders from outside the strategic authority.

⁸⁴ Part 1, paragraph 10, of new schedule 1A of the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#), inserted by schedule 4 of the 2026 Act

⁸⁵ New schedule 1A, paragraph 6, introduced by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026

Implications of local scrutiny committees

The government committed in the English Devolution White Paper to explore the concept of Local Public Accounts Committees (LPACs). This idea originated in a paper published by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in 2013.⁸⁶ LPACs would comprise an independent body in a locality that would examine public spending across all public bodies operating there, in the manner of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee.

The concept was picked up in oral evidence to the bill committee from Zoe Billingham, director of IPPR North:

We think that those committees need to represent place leadership; this is no longer narrow lines of inquiry about certain budgetary lines or solely about audit. It must be much broader. This is about place-based leadership, not only by the mayor and the mayoral cabinet, but by other public leaders locally who could be brought in front of such committees.⁸⁷

The government indicated in July 2025 that it was continuing to consider these issues.⁸⁸ At committee stage in the House of Commons, Vikki Slade introduced a new clause that would have required the formation of LPACs within one year of the bill becoming law. She said:

New clause 45 would make provision for new local public accounts committees to be formed within one year of the legislation being passed. These LPACs would be at mayoral strategic authority scale to ensure scrutiny and accountability of the mayor, but also scrutiny across the whole of local public services. Given the mayor's convening power across all those areas, that feels like the right space for them.⁸⁹

The new clause was rejected by 10 votes to three.⁹⁰ Sian Berry introduced a further amendment that would have required the Secretary of State to institute a general review of scrutiny practices in combined authorities six months after the bill received royal assent. The ensuing debate also spent a small amount of time on LPACs. In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

We have stated on the record that we understand the need to strengthen the accountability and the scrutiny mechanism for strategic authorities. We said this in the English devolution White Paper, my colleague said it in the House, and we are committed to that. I assure the Committee we will consider how to strengthen the scrutiny of strategic authorities, because I completely agree that as they acquire more powers, it is right we have accountability and scrutiny frameworks that are robust and fit for purpose, to ensure they are held to account for how they use the powers we confer on them.⁹¹

⁸⁶ See Jessica Crowe, [A local public accounts committee for every place](#), Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), 2013. See also more recent papers from CfGS: [Local Public Accounts Committees - CEGS](#), 2018; Ed Hammond, [Local Public Accounts Committees](#), 2023

⁸⁷ [PBC Deb 16 Sep 2025](#), c70

⁸⁸ [PQ HC 67389 2024-25](#), 21 Jul 2025

⁸⁹ [PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025](#) c491

⁹⁰ [PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025](#) c568

⁹¹ [PBC Deb 25 Oct 2025](#) c521

At report stage in the House of Lords, Lord Bichard proposed establishing LPACs in specific localities:

... over the last four decades our public services have become increasingly fragmented, with the establishment of a myriad of disconnected, sometimes single-purpose agencies whose objectives and targets have on occasions overlapped and even conflicted. As we all know, those agencies have worked too often in silos. As a result, the public have struggled to access or even make sense of the disjointed services that are on offer. ...

we need in every local area a body with the power to scrutinise and report on how all public sector partners co-operate or do not co-operate for the good of citizens. If instead we establish overview and scrutiny and scrutiny committees which address only the performance of a single institution, we will reinforce the silo-based mentality that we have created for another generation—all for the want of adding a simple power for the overview and scrutiny committees to report on how the wider system is working.⁹²

In response for the government, Baroness Taylor said:

Local scrutiny committees will replace overview and scrutiny committees in mayoral combined and combined county authorities, providing an enhanced scrutiny regime with stronger oversight and a broader remit to reflect the scale of mayoral responsibilities, with greater teeth to hold mayors to account.

To raise the quality of scrutiny, each local scrutiny committee will be required to consult independent expertise as part of their inquiries. We will set out in regulations that this should take the form of an independent panel...

The enhanced regime will be introduced first in the established mayoral strategic authorities in 2027, before extending to all mayoral strategic authorities in 2028.

In regulations, we will set out further detail on the enhanced scrutiny regime. This will include which stakeholders outside a mayoral strategic authority should be within the purview of a local scrutiny committee. We will conduct extensive engagement on this next phase of work.⁹³

Commentary on the concept of local public accounts committees has suggested that they should be able to summon individuals and demand documentation from bodies other than strategic authorities, giving them a wider remit; and that they should be better resourced and make use of expert advice. These provisions would permit – though not oblige – committees to be established that are similar to the idea of local public accounts committees.

The legislation states that the new committees should be known as ‘local scrutiny committees’, but that they can be renamed. Non-mayoral combined authorities will continue to have ‘overview and scrutiny committees’, using the existing legislation in the [Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009](#).

⁹² [HC Deb 24 Mar 2026](#) v c1452

⁹³ As above, c1454-56

2.7

Mayoral Council

The Labour government established a Mayoral Council in July 2024. All strategic authority mayors are members of the council. It has no decision-making powers or statutory existence. It meets to exchange information and discuss matters of common interest with ministers from relevant departments. At the time of writing it has met on some six occasions. Agendas and minutes have not been made public.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire introduced an amendment at Lords report stage that would have established a statutory Mayoral Council. This would have met with the Secretary of State at least four times a year, and its functions would have been:

- (a) to work with central government to create a framework for the further devolution of power within England,
- (b) to work with central government to agree the fair funding of local and strategic authorities, and
- (c) to choose representatives of the Mayoral Council to participate in the Council of Nations and Regions.⁹⁴

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage opposed the amendment on behalf of the government, saying:

..the existing mayoral council, and the Leaders Council of local authority leaders, are non-decision-making bodies so do not need to be in statute. The current format of the mayoral council and the Leaders Council has received very positive feedback on their collaborative nature from members of all political parties. The mayoral council has run a shadow right to request process, ahead of that process being made statutory through the Bill, without needing to be a statutory decision-making body. As a statutory process, the right to request provides certainty that engagement will take place.

The mayoral council and the Leaders Council are still relatively new forums, and they have already adapted to respond to feedback from members and the Government. As more devolution is delivered across the country and we get more mayors with more powers, their needs and best use may change. Retaining flexibility by not having forums set in statute will allow us to once again respond quickly to feedback to make sure these continue to be useful forums.⁹⁵

Lord Wallace did not move the amendment.

⁹⁴ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HSecond marshalled list of amendments to be moved on report \(Bill 174-II\)](#), 25 Mar 2026, amendment 181

⁹⁵ HL Deb 26 Mar 2026 c1664

3 Mayoral functions

3.1 Transport

Commons public bill committee

Amendments 88 to 97, 99 and 100: Local transport authority functions

The government tabled several amendments to schedule 9 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (schedule 12 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords).⁹⁶

Clause 29 and schedule 9 of the bill as introduced (clause 32 and schedule 12 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords) would make strategic authorities the sole local transport authority for their area.⁹⁷ Amendment 88 would clarify, for the purposes of the Transport Act 2000, when a county council or a council of a non-metropolitan district is not a local transport authority.⁹⁸

Paragraph 4 of schedule 9 sets out the voting arrangements that would be used for adopting local transport plans for mayoral combined authorities (CAs) and mayoral combined county authorities (CCAs). Amendments 89 to 97, 99 and 100 would extend this to cover all types of CAs and CCAs.⁹⁹

Amendments 98 and 101 to 104 relate to travel concessions. Clause 29 and schedule 9 of the bill as introduced would make strategic authorities responsible for concessionary travel. Amendments 98 and 101 to 104 would provide for a transition period, during which new CAs or CCAs would hold powers and duties on concessionary travel concurrently with their constituent authorities. At the end of this, the CA or CCA would become the sole travel concession authority for the area.¹⁰⁰

These amendments passed without division.

Amendment 87: Definition of “permit authority power”

The government tabled a minor amendment to schedule 8 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (schedule 11 of the bill as amended on report in

⁹⁶ [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]

⁹⁷ Department for Transport, [Letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport relating to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#) [PDF], 10 July 2025

⁹⁸ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 cc246-8](#)

⁹⁹ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c249](#)

¹⁰⁰ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 cc250-3](#)

the Lords) which would amend the definition of “permit authority power”.¹⁰¹ A permit authority is an authority which provides permits for road and street works to be undertaken.¹⁰²

This amendment passed without division.

Amendment 300: Sufficient docking space for micro-mobility vehicles

Amendment 300 was tabled by David Simmonds. It would have amended schedule 5 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (schedule 7 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords) to require licence holders for micromobility vehicles to ensure that there was sufficient docking space for their vehicles and ensuring that these do not obstruct any highways or public paths.¹⁰³

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said that the schedule would already give the Secretary of State the power to set licence conditions and the additional conditions that licensing authorities can set, as well as how these will be enforced. She also said that the government would publish guidance on best practice for deciding on parking provision and enforcement.¹⁰⁴

The amendment was rejected by nine votes to five.¹⁰⁵

Amendment 348: Civil enforcement of obstruction of a pavement

Amendment 348 was tabled by Marie Goldman (LD, Chelmsford). It would have amended schedule 7 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (schedule 10 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords) so that the existing law on obstruction of a pavement could be enforced by civil authorities as well as the police.¹⁰⁶

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said that the government was already considering measures to address pavement parking, and would respond to the 2020 consultation by the Department for Transport “in due course”.¹⁰⁷

This amendment was rejected by 10 votes to six.¹⁰⁸

Amendment 291: Parking charges

Amendment 291 was tabled by David Simmonds. It would have amended schedule 7 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (schedule 10 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords) so that mayors of combined county

¹⁰¹ [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]

¹⁰² [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c239](#)

¹⁰³ [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]; [HC Deb 16 October 2025 cc218-220](#)

¹⁰⁴ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c221](#)

¹⁰⁵ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Sixth sitting\) - Division 33](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]; [HC Deb 16 October 2025 cc230-1](#)

¹⁰⁷ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c235](#)

¹⁰⁸ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Sixth sitting\) - Division 34](#)

authorities would have been prevented from increasing charges for vehicle parking, and from using the proceeds of those charges.¹⁰⁹

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said that the bill would provide combined authorities and combined county authorities with the ability to take on powers on civil enforcement of contraventions of bus lanes and moving traffic restriction, but not paid-for parking places. She also added that any proceeds would be ring-fenced, in the same way as currently for local authorities, for environmental measures and public transport schemes.¹¹⁰

The amendment was rejected by 10 votes to three.¹¹¹

Amendments 287 and 288: Local transport plans

David Simmonds tabled these amendments. They would have amended clause 28 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (clause 31 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords) so that councils would have had to have “regard to” local transport plans, rather than be under a duty to implement them.¹¹²

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said that the aim of clause 28 was to ensure that local transport planning is consistent across strategic authority areas, and the proposed amendment would have reduced alignment between strategic authorities and their constituent councils.¹¹³

The amendment was rejected by 10 votes to three.¹¹⁴

Amendment 265: Air quality

Amendment 265 was tabled by Siân Berry (Green, Brighton Pavilion). It would have amended schedule 9 of the bill as introduced in the Commons (schedule 12 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords) to require a local transport authority preparing or revising a local transport plan to “have regard to” the air quality guidelines established by the World Health Organization.¹¹⁵

No government minister spoke in response to this amendment. It was rejected by 10 votes to one.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]; [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c228-9](#)

¹¹⁰ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c236](#)

¹¹¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Sixth sitting\) - Division 35](#)

¹¹² [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]; [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c244-5](#)

¹¹³ [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c245](#)

¹¹⁴ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Sixth sitting\) - Division 37](#)

¹¹⁵ [Bill 283 2024-25](#) [PDF] [as introduced]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]; [HC Deb 16 October 2025 c248](#)

¹¹⁶ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Sixth sitting\) - Division 39](#)

Commons report stage

Lane rental powers

The government tabled new clause 43 at Commons report stage. This would introduce a new schedule NS1 which would amend the [New Roads and Street Works Act 1991](#).¹¹⁷

A lane rental scheme allows a highway authority to charge utility companies (known as “statutory undertakers”) for undertaking works affecting maintainable roads in order to minimise disruption to drivers and other road users.¹¹⁸ Currently lane rental schemes require approval from the Secretary of State.¹¹⁹ This schedule would transfer to the mayors of mayoral strategic authorities the power to approve a local highway authority to introduce a lane rental scheme.

New clause 43 and new schedule NS1 were added to the bill without divisions. These became clause 25 and schedule 7 of the bill as brought from the Commons (clause 27 and schedule 9 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords).¹²⁰

Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing

In Great Britain, taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licenses are issued by local licensing authorities, which are usually local councils (district councils or unitary authorities), with the exception of Transport for London in London. Taxi licensing authorities in England and Wales are required to abide by [Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards](#), which are primarily aimed at safeguarding children and vulnerable adult passengers.¹²¹

In England, the Department for Transport (DfT) has non-statutory [best practice guidance for licensing authorities](#), which was updated in November 2023.¹²² In Wales, licensing authorities and drivers should abide by the [conditions set out by the Welsh Government](#).¹²³

In 2018 the government-commissioned [Task and Finish Group on Taxi and Private Hiring Licensing](#) reported that many drivers now work mainly outside, and sometimes a considerable distance from, the authority they are licenced by. This is known as ‘cross-border working’. The report also said that cross-border working makes the enforcement of standards much harder, as

¹¹⁷ [New Roads and Street Works Act 1991](#)

¹¹⁸ Department for Transport, [Lane rental schemes: guidance for English highway authorities](#), 3 April 2025

¹¹⁹ Department for Transport, [Lane rental schemes: guidance for English highway authorities](#), 3 April 2025

¹²⁰ [HL Bill 150](#) [as brought from the Commons]; [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]

¹²¹ DfT Statutory guidance, [Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards](#), 25 November 2022

¹²² DfT Guidance, [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: best practice](#), 17 November 2023

¹²³ Welsh Government, [Taxis and private hire vehicles](#) (accessed 25 March 2026)

licensing authorities can only take action against vehicles, drivers and operators licensed in their area.¹²⁴

In its 2019 response to the report, the government said that there should be national minimum standards for taxi and PHV licensing in England.¹²⁵

On 8 January 2026 the DfT also launched a consultation on making local transport authorities (unitary authorities, county councils or strategic authorities) in England responsible for taxi and PHV licensing.¹²⁶ This would reduce the number of licensing authorities in England from 263 to 70.¹²⁷

Further information on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing is given in section 4 ‘Taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs)’ of the Library briefing [Buses and Taxis FAQs](#).¹²⁸

At Commons report stage, the government introduced a number of new clauses which would enable the setting of national minimum standards in licensing.¹²⁹

New clause 49 would define the terms “national minimum standards” and “regulated licence”.

New clause 50 would give the Secretary of State for Transport powers to make regulations to set the national minimum standards. It would also give the Secretary of State powers, for each standard, to determine whether the relevant licensing authority must refuse a licence if it is not satisfied that the standard is being met, or can choose whether or not to grant a licence in such circumstances.

Regulations made under this clause would be made under the affirmative procedure when they are first made. Changes to these regulations would be made under the negative procedure.¹³⁰ Exercise of this power will be subject to a statutory duty to consult.¹³¹

¹²⁴ DfT Independent report, [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: recommendations for a safer and more robust system](#), 28 September 2018

¹²⁵ DfT, [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: government response to independent report](#), 12 February 2019, paras 2.4 – 2.6

¹²⁶ DfT, [Local transport authorities and the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles](#), 8 January 2026

¹²⁷ Department for Transport and Lilian Greenwood MP, [Press release: New proposals set out to reduce 'out-of-area' working for taxis and boost passenger safety](#), 8 January 2026

¹²⁸ Commons Library research briefing CBP-8734, [Buses and Taxis FAQs](#)

¹²⁹ [HC Deb 25 November 2025 cc267, 285-7](#)

¹³⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, paras 509-15; UK Parliament, [Glossary. Affirmative procedure](#) (accessed 2 April 2026); UK Parliament, [Glossary. Negative procedure](#) (accessed 2 April 2026)

¹³¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, para 515

New clause 51 would give a licensing authority powers to suspend or revoke a licence if it is not satisfied that a national minimum standard is continuing to be met during the licence period.

Regulations made under this clause would be made under the affirmative procedure when they are first made. Changes to these regulations would be made under the negative procedure.¹³² Exercise of this power will be subject to a statutory duty to consult.¹³³

New clause 52 would give the Secretary of State powers to make regulations to set national minimum standards for the renewal of a licence.

Regulations made under this clause would be made under the affirmative procedure when they are first made. Changes to these regulations would be made under the negative procedure.¹³⁴ Exercise of this power will be subject to a statutory duty to consult.¹³⁵

New clause 53 would set out what the national minimum standards may relate to and the actions that they might require. The explanatory notes to the bill as brought from the House of Commons on 27 November 2025, give the following examples of things national minimum standards could relate to: “applicants, licence holders, types of vehicles, training requirements or vehicle equipment.” However, they also note that the clause does not limit the kinds of standards that can be set.¹³⁶ New clause 53 would also give the Secretary of State powers to prescribe national minimum standards to be applied retrospectively to existing as well as new licences.

New clause 54 would give the Secretary of State powers to issue statutory guidance to licensing authorities in connection with the national minimum standards, and to revise or revoke this guidance.

¹³² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, paras 516-23; UK Parliament, [Glossary, Affirmative procedure](#) (accessed 2 April 2026); UK Parliament, [Glossary, Negative procedure](#) (accessed 2 April 2026)

¹³³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, para 523

¹³⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, paras 524-30; UK Parliament, [Glossary, Affirmative procedure](#) (accessed 2 April 2026); UK Parliament, [Glossary, Negative procedure](#) (accessed 2 April 2026)

¹³⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, para 530

¹³⁶ [Explanatory notes to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill HL Bill 150](#), paras 405-7

Any guidance issued under this clause would not be subject to Parliamentary procedure.¹³⁷

New clause 55 would amend existing legislation to clarify that, in the future, it would be subject to requirements set out in regulations prescribing national minimum standards.

New clause 56 would require the Secretary of State to consult before making regulations setting out the national minimum standards. It would also make the regulations setting out national minimum standards subject to the affirmative parliamentary procedure when these are made for the first time, with subsequent regulations subject to the negative resolution procedure.

This is a Henry VIII power.¹³⁸ Regulations made under this clause would be made under the affirmative procedure.¹³⁹

New clause 57 defines a number of terms used in the preceding clauses.

Speaking about these amendments, Miatta Fahnbulleh, Minister for Devolution, Faith and Communities described the current legislative framework for regulating taxi and private hire vehicle in England as “complex, fragmented and archaic”.¹⁴⁰ She also said that the government recognised the challenges that the current licensing framework can cause, in particular highlighting the inconsistency of licensing standards and the practice of out-of-area working. She said that the power for the Secretary of State to set national minimum standards for the licensing of drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles would begin to tackle some of these inconsistencies. She described the powers as “necessarily broad”, saying that this is to make sure that they “catch all the complexities of the current legislative framework”.¹⁴¹

There was limited debate on these new clauses, with Sam Carling (Lab) and Chair of the Transport Select Committee Ruth Cadbury (Lab) both speaking in favour of them.¹⁴²

The new clauses were added to the bill without divisions.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, para 534

¹³⁸ UK Parliament, [Glossary: Henry VIII clauses](#) (accessed 25 March 2026)

¹³⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Memorandum from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee \(on moving to the House of Lords\)](#), 27 November 2025, paras 535-7; UK Parliament, [Glossary: Affirmative procedure](#) (accessed 25 March 2026)

¹⁴⁰ [HC Deb 25 November 2025 c285](#)

¹⁴¹ [HC Deb 25 November 2025 cc285-6](#)

¹⁴² [HC Deb 25 November 2025 cc303-4](#); [HC Deb 25 November 2025 cc318-9](#)

¹⁴³ [HC Deb 25 November 2025 cc325-30](#)

These became Chapter 3: Licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles of part 3 of the bill as brought from the Commons (clauses 64 to 72).¹⁴⁴ These are clauses 72 to 76 and 85 to 88 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords.¹⁴⁵

Lords report stage amendments

Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing

The government introduced a number of new clauses at report stage relating to taxi and private hire vehicle licensing.

Government amendment 279 introduced a new clause after clause 68 of the bill as brought from the Commons. This would amend the [Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles \(Safeguarding and Road Safety\) Act 2022](#) to require information about breaches of national standards to be reported to the authority where the driver is licensed.¹⁴⁶

Government amendments 280 to 286 introduced further new clauses after clause 68 of the bill as brought from the Commons. These relate to the temporary suspension of licences.¹⁴⁷

The amendments were agreed without divisions, and became clauses 77 to 84 of the bill as amended on report in the Lords.¹⁴⁸

Pavement parking

In January 2026, the government published its response to the 2020 consultation on ‘Managing Pavement Parking’.¹⁴⁹ It states that the government intends to introduce primary legislation ‘at the next legislative opportunity’, to create powers to enable local transport authorities to prohibit pavement parking.

The government also stated that it intends to introduce secondary legislation to ensure local authorities can enforce against ‘egregious’ cases of obstruction caused by pavement parking.

¹⁴⁴ [HL Bill 150](#) [as brought from the Commons]

¹⁴⁵ [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]

¹⁴⁶ [Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles \(Safeguarding and Road Safety\) Act 2022; English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 279](#)

¹⁴⁷ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 280](#); [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 281](#); [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 282](#); [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 283](#); [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 284](#); [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 285](#); [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26, Lords report stage amendment 286](#)

¹⁴⁸ [HL Bill 185](#) [as amended on report]

¹⁴⁹ Department for Transport, [Pavement parking options for change: government response](#), 8 January 2026

In the Lords report stage of the bill, the government introduced a clause (amendment 245), and accompanying schedule (amendment 265), which would enable local traffic authorities to prohibit pavement parking.¹⁵⁰

The schedule which the clause would introduce would enable the Secretary of State to make regulations which give English local transport authorities the power to prohibit the parking of motor vehicles on footways and verges.¹⁵¹ It would also allow local authorities to introduce exceptions to a pavement parking prohibition, for example sections of road, or specific vehicles. Local authorities may also have to 'carry out consultation' before they can introduce a ban on pavement parking.

Regulations proposed under this schedule would be subject to the affirmative procedure.¹⁵²

Neither amendment was debated in the Lords report stage, and they were both agreed upon without division.

3.2

Adult education

Successful amendments

Clause 30 of the bill introduces schedule 10, which, following amendments made at committee stage, is concerned with strategic authorities and their 16 to 19 and adult education functions.

In the original bill, schedule 10 would have amended the [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#) to confer duties and powers on strategic authorities in England in relation to adult education. At committee stage, the government tabled [amendment 107](#), which clarified that the six adult education functions would become exercisable when at least one full academic year had passed following the establishment or designation of a new strategic authority. The government said this was to give strategic authorities “time to build their adult skills teams, develop their skills strategies and plan how they will fund and procure adult skills provision in their areas, thereby maximising the chances of effective delivery.”¹⁵³

At committee stage the government also tabled [amendment 105](#) to change the language in clause 30 so it no longer concerned just adult education but education more broadly. This was to reflect government [amendment 108](#), which added a second part to schedule 10 that would confer functions on strategic authorities in relation to education for 16- to 19-year-olds. This part would amend the [Education Act 1996](#) to require all strategic authorities to

¹⁵⁰ [HL Deb 13 April 2026 c84-132](#)

¹⁵¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, Lords report stage amendment 265](#)

¹⁵² [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, Lords report stage amendment 265](#)

¹⁵³ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, PBC Deb sixth sitting, 16 October 2025, cc259-60](#)

work with their constituent councils to ensure local education and training provision meets the needs of young people in their areas.

Clause 30 and schedule 10 were agreed to stand part of the bill as amended.

Unsuccessful new clauses

The Liberal Democrats tabled a number of new clauses relating to the bill's provisions for skills and adult education.

- [New clause 56](#) would have required strategic authorities to exercise joint leadership with employer representative bodies in developing Local Skills Improvement Plans.
- [New clause 57](#) would have required strategic authorities to consider existing provision for 16 to 19 education and higher education in their area when exercising adult education functions.
- [New clause 58](#) would have required strategic authorities to publish annual reports on their exercise of adult education functions.

Introducing the new clauses for the Liberal Democrats, Manuela Perteghella said: “In combination, the new clauses will ensure that, when skills policy is devolved, there is proper governance, accountability and co-ordination mechanisms among the various bodies.”¹⁵⁴

In response, the Devolution Minister Miatta Fahnbulleh said updated statutory guidance will set out how strategic authorities and employer representative bodies should work together on the next round of local skills improvement plans, and will include a requirement for agreement on the plan from both parties.¹⁵⁵ She also argued that new clause 57 was unnecessary because, in practice strategic authorities were already considering a wide range of local factors, in the exercise of the adult education functions.¹⁵⁶

Only new clause 56 was moved during committee stage but it was ultimately withdrawn following debate.

¹⁵⁴ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, PBC Deb twelfth sitting, 28 October 2025, cc575-76](#)

¹⁵⁵ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, PBC Deb twelfth sitting, 28 October 2025, c577](#)

¹⁵⁶ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, PBC Deb twelfth sitting, 28 October 2025, c577](#)

3.3

Planning

At committee stage, government amendments to schedules 15 and 16 were agreed. Amendments to schedule 12 and 14 proposed by other parties were withdrawn or disagreed on division.

Schedule 15

Miatta Fahnbulleh introduced amendments 109 to 154 on behalf of the government. Some of these were technical and / or consequential amendments. For example, amendments have been made to leave out the term “combined authority” as this is already within the definition of “local authority” in section 336 of the [Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#). Instead, amendments have added “non-mayoral combined authority or non-mayoral CCA”.

The key amendments focus on the acquisition of land by strategic authorities and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) using compulsory purchase powers, and associated requirements for consultation and authorisation:

- Amendment 109 would change schedule 15 section 9(2) so that the functions relating to the Homes and Communities Agency would only be conferred on strategic authorities outside London, and not on the Greater London Authority (GLA).
- Amendments 113, 116, 125, 132 and 135 would make the Broads Authority a consultee if any of the land in its area was proposed for compulsory purchase, and amendment 123 would require consent from the Broads Authority.
- Amendments 118, 121, 137 and 140 would require consent from the Broads Authority, and a constituent council, if any of the land was proposed for compulsory purchase in their area.
- Amendment 128 would allow for restrictions on the use of land that was connected to religious worship but was neither consecrated nor a burial ground.
- Amendment 129 would require the Secretary of State to consult a strategic authority as well as a local authority before authorising a compulsory acquisition.
- Amendment 130 removes compulsory purchase acquisition to be exercisable by the mayor, so that it would be exercisable by the combined authority or combined county authority instead.
- Amendment 153 relates to ‘override rights of possession’ and the ‘constitution of joint body to hold land for planning purposes’. Powers would be extended to all combined authorities (CAs) and combined county authorities (CCAs).

- Amendment 154 would extend the powers currently in place for local authorities (which include mayoral CAs and mayoral CCAs in their definition) to non-mayoral CAs and non-mayoral CCAs. The amendment relates to existing powers to extinguish, extend or modify the functions of statutory undertakers.

Schedule 16

Miatta Fahnbulleh introduced amendments 155 to 170 on behalf of government. Some of these were technical and / or consequential amendments. For example, the definition of ‘local housing authorities’ is broadened to ‘an authority’ so that strategic authorities are within its scope.

The main amendments are:

- Amendment 155 would remove any duplication of work regarding consideration of housing conditions, so that a strategic authority can take account of this assessment and consideration of housing matters where it has already been completed by a local authority.
- Amendments 160, 163 and 169 would make the Broads Authority a consultee if any of the land was proposed for compulsory purchase in its area.
- Amendments 165 and 168 would require consent of the Broads Authority, and a constituent council, if any of the land was proposed for compulsory purchase in their area.

Schedule 12

For schedule 12, the following amendments were disagreed or withdrawn after debate:

- Amendment 304 was introduced by David Simmonds. The new clause ‘Density requirement’ would have required Mayoral Development Orders (MDOs) to prioritise planning applications in areas of high urban density and public transport accessibility, and would have required MDOs to be issued for previously developed land. Amendment 304 was withdrawn after debate.
- Amendments 58 and 252 were introduced by Vikki Slade (Lib Dem) and were also withdrawn after debate:
 - Amendment 58 would have removed the provision for the Secretary of State to have the power to approve an MDO where a local planning authority had not approved it by the end of the period.
 - Amendment 252 would have required mayors to ensure that planning applications being considered would have regard to any Strategic Spatial Energy Plan and, or Land Use Framework in place for the area.

For schedule 14, amendment 289 was introduced by David Simmonds (Con). This would have ensured that mayors charging a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would need to report on the effect this had on housing development.

At committee stage, Miatta Fahnbulleh explained how the mayoral CIL would be used:

There is a key question of how to ensure that the mayoral strategic CIL does not undercut local CILs. The mayor will have to have regard to local CILs that are already being issued, to ensure that there is a balance. The CIL proposal will need to be done in the context of viability assessments, so the mayor will need to think about what is happening at the parish, town and local authority levels in terms of CIL before a strategic CIL is put in place. It is also worth noting that the charging schedule will be subject to statutory consultation.¹⁵⁷

While the need for transparency was supported by the government, it said amendment 289 was not considered necessary as it would duplicate existing regulatory requirements. The amendment was rejected by 10 votes to two.

New planning clauses introduced by the House of Lords

At report stage in the House of Lords, the following amendments were proposed which are relevant to planning.

Brownfield land priority

Baroness Scott proposed a new clause on ‘brownfield land priority’ which was agreed on division (amendment 121: content 152, not content 128).¹⁵⁸

The new clause would require a strategic authority to be satisfied that no brownfield land is available within their relevant area before greenfield land is designated for development. When considering whether brownfield land is suitable the new clause would have regard for the availability of land and the viability and environmental impact of development.

The amendment was subject to disagreement by the House of Commons during ‘ping pong’ as “national planning policy already ensures that brownfield land is prioritised for development”. At the final stage of ping pong the House of Commons proposed a motion to insert a new clause which would amend section 12G of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for the preparation of a draft spatial development strategy. The new clause would require the Secretary of State to make regulations to “prescribe the desirability of prioritising development on land that has been previously

¹⁵⁷ Hansard, [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, Committee Stage, seventh sitting](#), 21 October 2025

¹⁵⁸ [HL Deb 26 March 2026](#)

developed”.¹⁵⁹ The amendment was agreed by the House of Lords at the last stage of ping pong on 28 April 2026.

Agent of change principle

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering proposed a new clause on the ‘agent of change: integration of new development with existing businesses and facilities’. This was agreed on division at the House of Lords report stage (amendment 246: content 214, not content 156).¹⁶⁰

The new clause would require consideration of the ‘agent of change principle’¹⁶¹ by local authorities when carrying out planning and licensing functions. It would also introduce a statutory requirement for planning applications for development located near to licensed premises to include noise impact assessments. Local authorities would also need to consider the ‘agent of change principle’ when investigating nuisance complaints.

During ping pong the Commons disagreed to the proposed amendment: “Because it is not necessary to make provision in primary legislation about the agent of change principle”.¹⁶² The reason for disagreement also applied to further amendments proposed by the House of Lords and the amendment was not carried forward after 27 April 2026.

Disposal of land held in statutory trusts

A new chapter was introduced on ‘land disposed of by local councils’ with new clauses on statutory trusts¹⁶³. Lord Banner initially proposed the amendment during the [eighth day of the Lords Committee stage](#) of the bill on 5 March 2026. Introducing the amendment, Lord Banner noted that a similar amendment had been proposed to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (now an act) to address “the wide-reaching consequences for persons who acquire former public open-space land” in light of the Supreme Court judgment in [R \(on the application of Day\) v Shropshire Council](#). Lord Banner noted that the judgment had caused “considerable uncertainty in relation to land purchased in good faith from local authorities, sometimes decades ago”. He added that while the government “had some sympathy” with the proposed amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, “further consideration was

¹⁵⁹ [HL Bill 199 Commons Insistence on Disagreement Insistence, Amendments in Lieu and Amendment To The Words So Restored To The Bill, 28 April 2026](#)

¹⁶⁰ HL Deb 13 April 2026

¹⁶¹ “agent of change principle” is the principle that planning policies and decisions ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities so that those businesses and facilities do not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of developments permitted after they were established.

¹⁶² HL Bill 196 Commons Non-Insistence, Amendment to the Lords Amendment, Reasons, Insistent on Disagreement, Insistence, Amendment to the Words So Restored to the Bill, and Amendments In Lieu, 27 April 2026

¹⁶³ Under the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972), statutory trusts often apply to public open spaces, recreational land, or allotments held by local authorities for public enjoyment.

needed”, resulting in the proposed amendment to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.¹⁶⁴

After consideration of the amendment, Lord Banner [stated](#) that while he welcomed “the Minister’s support in principle for the amendment”, the “degree of contention” that the amendment had generated meant he would withdraw it and “bring it back on Report”.¹⁶⁵

The amendment was brought back to the House of Lords report stage by Lord Banner on 13 April 2026 and agreed to on division (amendment 248: content 162, not content 55).¹⁶⁶

The proposed amendment would “seek to enable the Secretary of State to make an order in relation to land previously appropriated or disposed of by a council. The order would discharge the land from statutory trusts relating to open land that arise under section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875 or section 10 of the Open Spaces Act 1906.”¹⁶⁷ This means the Secretary of State would have the power to release the land from its statutory trust status.

The new clauses covered the procedures to apply for a statutory trust discharge order, the criteria used to determine whether an order would be granted, new and existing publication arrangements and new powers granted to the Secretary of State. The new clauses are set out under the following headings:

- Discharge of statutory trusts: the Secretary of State would be granted powers to make a statutory trust discharge order subject to the qualifying conditions being met.
- Application for statutory trust discharge orders: A freehold landowner or leaseholder with a long lease would be able to make an application for a statutory trust discharge order for the Secretary of State to consider.
- Applications where land has been divided up either by a principal or parish council, or due to division of freehold or leasehold titles.
- Qualifying conditions: the new clause would set out the circumstances and conditions that would need to be considered by the Secretary of State when determining whether to discharge a statutory trust.
- New publicity requirements: which would require notice of an application to be published for four consecutive weeks, as well as being published on the applicant’s website, published by the Secretary of State, and displayed at the point of entry to the land subject to the statutory trust for 28 days.

¹⁶⁴ [HL Deb 5 March 2026 c527GC](#)

¹⁶⁵ [HL Deb 5 March 2026 c537GC](#)

¹⁶⁶ [HL Deb 13 April 2026](#)

¹⁶⁷ UK Parliament, [Lord Banners amendment after clause 63](#)

- Previous advertisement procedure: the Secretary of State would be required to notify the relevant council or parish trustees where an application for a statutory trust discharge order has been made, and for the relevant council or parish trustees to confirm that previous advertisement procedures were or were not complied with.
- Making statutory trust discharge orders: setting out the process for making statutory discharge orders, including what matters the Secretary of State must take into account and when the order would come into effect.
- Interpretation and application to the Crown sets out the definitions relating to the new clauses and how this would relate to land which forms part of the Crown estate.

In response to the proposed amendment Baroness Taylor outlined the issue with statutory trusts:

currently there is no way of release of statutory trusts where the original statutory advertisement procedure has not been complied with. The consequence is stark: land can remain bound by a statutory trust in perpetuity, even if that outcome serves today's communities or the wider public interest.¹⁶⁸

Baroness Taylor referred to the position presented by current statutory trust arrangements as “an inflexible legal position” which risks blocking development that is in the public interest. Reflecting on the amendment, Baroness Taylor confirmed the government “strongly supported the amendment” and said:

It would create a clear, lawful mechanism to address historic errors, while ensuring that statutory trusts are discharged only where it is right to do so...the amendment would restore fairness, unlock stalled opportunities and ensure that decisions about public land were made deliberately, transparently and in the public interest.¹⁶⁹

Baroness Taylor also noted that MHCLG is undertaking an internal review of the legislative framework for public open spaces and green spaces with a view to clarify current statutory protections, assess how effective they are and whether they can be simplified.

Baroness Scott proposed a further amendment which would prevent statutory trust order regulations from being made until the government completed a review of open space, and for “the Secretary of State to have regard to the outcomes of the review”. The amendment was disagreed on division (content 135, not content 154)¹⁷⁰ at the House of Lords report stage on 13 April 2026.

¹⁶⁸ [HL Deb 13 April 2026](#) c121

¹⁶⁹ [HL Deb 13 April 2026](#) c121

¹⁷⁰ [HL Deb 13 April 2026](#)

3.4

Mayoral development corporations

Paul Holmes introduced an amendment that would have prevented mayoral development corporations from designating greenfield land for development unless land that had already been developed was not available. Mr Holmes said:

...we want to make it much easier to build in areas of existing development where there is scope for densification, and we want to protect green belt and greenfield land by restricting building on it where many people to whom the mayor is accountable simply do not want that to happen. The amendment would not rule out such development completely, but it would make the MDC more streamlined and disciplined about unlocking areas where infrastructure exists.¹⁷¹

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

We believe it is important to give mayoral development corporations flexibility, however, because there will be instances, in the case of urban extensions or new towns, when the decision needs to be made to build on greenfield land. We think that the amendment would disproportionately restrict mayoral development corporations and place on them additional restrictions that do not apply to other bodies. Ultimately, it would reduce mayoral development corporations' flexibility, slow down delivery and add unnecessary constraints on decision making.¹⁷²

A government amendment (79) was also accepted to the [Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#) regarding Mayoral Development Corporations. This amendment provided that an MDC can include land that was already within the area of a locally-led development corporation; but that it cannot include land that was already within the area of a development corporation established by the Secretary of State. Likewise, a Secretary of State-led development corporation may take on land within an MDC, and supplementary regulations can remove the land from the MDC's area.

3.5

Local Growth Plans

Committee stage and amendments

New clause 29, and new schedule 1

New clause 29, and new schedule 1 from Siân Berry proposed replacing clause 38 and schedule 19 of the Bill, which would require mayoral CAs and CCAs to produce and publish local growth plans.

¹⁷¹ PBC Deb 21 Oct 2025 c300

¹⁷² As above

The new clause and schedule sought to replace this requirement with a requirement to produce and publish “inclusive economy plans.” Siân Berry stated inclusive economy plans would “have the same prominence in terms of policy priorities as the proposed growth plans” and “wherever the goal of growth appears, my new version says instead that our goal would be an inclusive economy or economic inclusivity”.¹⁷³

Responding, Miatta Fahnbulleh stated the aims of the new clause and schedule are “already locked into the Bill” and that “local growth plans, as set out in the Bill and as conceived, are a manifesto commitment for this Government” and that existing regional mayors “have already developed their plans, with many starting to publish them already”.¹⁷⁴

The new clause and schedule were not put to a vote. Clause 38 was ordered to stand part of the Bill without division.

Amendments 52 and 53

Amendments 52 and 53 were tabled by Vikki Slade. These would have amended schedule 19 of the Bill and required the government to ensure that mayoral CAs and CCAs “have sufficient financial resources and adequate administrative support” to perform functions relating to the preparation, publication and delivery of local growth plans.

Speaking in favour of the amendments, Vikki Slade said the requirement to produce local growth plans was “pushing huge amounts of responsibility, cost and activity into a space that does not yet have clarity about how that will be paid for”.¹⁷⁵

Responding to these amendments, Miatta Fahnbulleh said the government would be “providing capacity-building funding for mayoral strategic authorities, so that they can not only set up but do some of the core enabling functions, such as producing plans, well and effectively”.¹⁷⁶

The amendments were withdrawn.

Amendments 352 to 357

Amendments 352 to 357 were tabled by Manuela Perteghella. These amendments would have amended schedule 19 of the Bill to require mayoral CAs and CCAs to engage with town and parish councils when creating local growth plans and to include information on the views of town and parish councils about local growth plans within the plans, as well as allowing the government to create guidance about minimum levels of engagement.

In response to these amendments, Miatta Fahnbulleh said that “local growth plans should reflect the diverse needs and views of a range of local and

¹⁷³ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 308](#)

¹⁷⁴ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 311](#)

¹⁷⁵ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 333](#)

¹⁷⁶ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 334](#)

regional stakeholders. Not only is this already possible, but it is actively encouraged” and that “specifying a minimum level of engagement for town and parish councils is disproportionate and over-prescriptive”.¹⁷⁷

The amendments were withdrawn.

Amendment 358

Clause 40 of the Bill would extend local authority powers to encourage tourism and visitors to their area for “recreation or health purposes” under the Local Government Act 1972 to mayoral CAs and CCAs and their constituent councils.

Amendment 358, tabled by Manuela Perteghella (Lib Dem), would have introduced a requirement for mayoral CAs and CCAs and their constituent councils exercising these powers to encourage tourism to engage with town and parish councils.

In the debate, Manuela Perteghella argued the amendment was about “giving local communities representation in tourism planning” and “would also ensure inclusive planning” and help “promote sustainable tourism”.¹⁷⁸

Responding to the amendment, Miatta Fahnbulleh stated that while town and parish councils are “important local partners” and there is an expectation local authorities will “work with them where appropriate” it is not “proportionate or right to put that in the Bill as a legal requirement”.¹⁷⁹

Amendment 358 was rejected by 10 votes to five.¹⁸⁰

Amendments 359 and 360

Amendments 359 and 360 were tabled by Sarah Dyke (Lib Dem). These amendments would have amended schedule 19 of the Bill and would require mayoral combined authorities and mayoral combined county authorities to “make specific reference to the proposed benefits” of local growth plans “on areas which are rural, remote, or coastal”.

Responding to these amendments, Miatta Fahnbulleh said local growth plans “provide a framework for growth for all parts of their regions” describing the amendments as “too prescriptive”, saying “it is right that we create the flexibility for mayors to understand their patch across the piece and then respond effectively in their local growth plan”.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 324](#)

¹⁷⁸ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 342](#)

¹⁷⁹ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 345](#)

¹⁸⁰ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025 cc339-346 \(Division 46\)](#)

¹⁸¹ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 332](#)

Amendment 359 was rejected by 10 votes to five.¹⁸² Amendment 360 was not put to a vote.

Amendments 364 and 365

Amendments 364 and 365, tabled by Vikki Slade, would have amended schedule 19 of the Bill and would require mayoral CAs and CCAs to have regard to targets set by the Environment Act 2021, Climate Change Act 2008, and Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 in developing local growth plans.

Speaking in favour of the amendments, Vikki Slade argued that “economic growth should not be off the back of public health and environmental damage” and adding these requirements would “be a minor change” to the Bill.¹⁸³

Responding, Miatta Fahnbulleh said the government intends to “reflect on the guidance that comes alongside local growth plans” to ensure that national climate and environmental obligations “are reflected in every tier of Government”.¹⁸⁴

Amendments 364 was rejected by 12 votes to three.¹⁸⁵ Amendment 365 was not put to a vote.

Government amendments 172, 173, 175 to 177, 179 to 181, 183 to 185, 187, 189, 190, 192 to 194, and 196

The Committee agreed without division a number of Government amendments that would amend schedule 19 of the Bill. These amendments would expand the definition of relevant bodies that can be named in secondary legislation that must “have regard” to shared local growth priorities agreed with mayoral CAs and CCAs, with the definition expanded from non-departmental public bodies to any relevant public authority. A Minister of the Crown or government department would also be able to be specified in regulations to be bound by the duty to have regard to shared local growth priorities.

These amendments would also ensure that, where relevant public authorities carry out activities in England and other parts of the UK, new duties relating to local growth priorities will only apply to activities the relevant public authority carries out in England.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025 cc338-332 \(Division 45\)](#)

¹⁸³ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 326](#)

¹⁸⁴ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025, c 327](#)

¹⁸⁵ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025 cc326-328 \(Division 43\)](#)

¹⁸⁶ English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, [HC Deb 21 October 2025 cc335-338](#)

3.6

Health improvement and health inequalities duty

Clause 43 of the bill would introduce a new duty on all CAs and CCAs to ‘have regard’ to the need to improve the health of people in their areas and reduce health inequalities between persons in their areas, when they act. The clause also makes corresponding provision in relation to the mayor of a mayoral CA or mayoral CCA.

Several amendments to this clause were tabled and introduced by frontbench representatives from the Liberal Democrat and Green parties. Some were withdrawn after short debate, with some disagreed to on division.

Vikki Slade MP introduced amendments for the Liberal Democrats (Amendments [247](#) and [248](#)) that would require the Secretary of State to review the financial and administrative needs of CAs and CCAs with regard to reducing health inequalities in their areas. She said these amendments sought assurance that CAs will have “sufficient financial resources” and “adequate administrative support” to fulfil their duties on health and health inequalities.¹⁸⁷ Minister Miatta Fahnbulleh MP reiterated assurances that strategic authorities would have the resources and capacity to take on new functions and duties.¹⁸⁸

For the Green Party, Siân Berry MP introduced amendments to require mayoral authorities and CCAs to develop a “Health and Wellbeing in All Policies Strategy”, in consultation with specified stakeholders (Amendments [255](#) and [256](#)). Minister Miatta Fahnbulleh MP responded that the government was “absolutely aligned” with the intent behind the amendment, saying nothing in the bill would prevent local partners from agreeing to align on an area-wide approach or strategy. However, the Minister also highlighted the importance of CAs and CCAs having local discretion to decide the best way to fulfil the duty and deliver for their communities. She added that while it was not necessary or appropriate to add further mandatory planning requirements in the bill, the government will continue to monitor the impact of the new duty “so we can ensure that the intent is aligned with practice and delivery.”¹⁸⁹ Siân Berry MP withdrew the amendment.¹⁹⁰

Health determinants

Health inequalities are broadly defined in the bill as ‘inequalities in respect of life expectancy or general state of health which are wholly or partly a result of

¹⁸⁷ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 c348](#)

¹⁸⁸ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 c349](#)

¹⁸⁹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 c349](#)

¹⁹⁰ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 c357-8](#)

differences in respect of general health determinants.’ These ‘general health determinants’ are listed as:

- (a) standards of housing, transport services or public safety,
- (b) employment prospects, earning capacity and any other matters that affect levels of prosperity,
- (c) the degree of ease or difficulty with which persons have access to public services,
- (d) the use, or level of use, of tobacco, alcohol or other substances, and any other matters of personal behaviour or lifestyle, that are or may be harmful to health, and any other matters that are determinants of life expectancy or the state of health of persons generally, other than genetic or biological factors.

Siân Berry MP introduced several amendments for the Green Party, to further specify some of the wider determinants of inequalities that strategic authorities would need to address. Amendments [257-260](#) sought to expand the list of general health determinants, so that it would have included access to green space; and exposure to environmental harm (including air pollution, water pollution, land pollution, and any other form of environmental pollution). Amendments 257 and 259 were both disagreed on division, by 8 votes to 3.¹⁹¹

Both the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats proposed separate amendments that would have included air quality as a general health determinant which strategic authorities had to consider in their duty to reduce health inequalities, and both pushed their amendments to division, where they were disagreed to.¹⁹²

Subsequently, the government introduced amendments at report stage (nos 116, 117 and 118) that would add “environmental factors, including air quality and access to green space and bodies of water” to the list of wider determinants of health in the bill. This change of definition will impact on the existing GLA health inequalities strategy, as well as the new duty for combined authority mayors.

Two further Green party amendments (Amendments [262](#) and [263](#)) sought to ensure that the health improvement and health inequalities duty focused explicitly on tackling poverty and socio-economic inequality, rather than more broadly referring to “any other matters that affect levels of prosperity” in subsection (b).¹⁹³ These were withdrawn without a division.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 Divisions 47 and 49](#)

¹⁹² [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 Divisions 48 and 50](#)

¹⁹³ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 c349](#)

¹⁹⁴ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill PBC 21 October 2025 c350](#)

3.7

Local oversight of policing

Clauses 44-45 and schedule 21 would establish a new route for the Secretary of State to determine that a mayoral CA or CCA will take on the functions of the police and crime commissioner for their area. This could be done where the combined authority boundary aligns with one or more police force boundaries.

Background

There are 39 territorial police forces across England. Under part 1 of the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#), there must be a directly elected politician in each police force area who is responsible for providing direction and oversight of the police force.¹⁹⁵

For most police forces, this is the police and crime commissioner (PCC). However, in five areas (Greater London, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire) PCC functions are delivered by the elected mayor of the combined authority.

On 13 November 2025, the government announced further reforms to abolish PCCs altogether from May 2028 (see below).¹⁹⁶

Currently, the Home Secretary can transfer powers from a PCC to a mayor of a CA or CCA by introducing secondary legislation, on the condition that:

- they secure the consent of the mayor,
- a public consultation has been held, and
- they are of the view that the proposed changes are likely to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of some or all of the people who live or work in the area.

This is only possible if the boundary of the police force aligns exactly with the combined authority.

The bill would establish a new simpler route for PCC functions to be transferred to a mayor. Under these provisions, the Secretary of State could introduce secondary legislation to:

- transfer PCC functions to a mayor where the authority's area aligns with a police force area (without the requirement for consent or consultation)

¹⁹⁵ The chief constable remains responsible for all operational matters (such as live investigations, policing tactics and internal appointments). The Library briefing [Police and Crime Commissioners](#) provides more information on the functions of PCCs.

¹⁹⁶ Home Office, [Police and crime commissioners to be scrapped](#), 13 November 2025

- transfer PCC functions to a mayor for more than one police force area, if the total area aligns with that of the CA or CCA
- amend police force boundaries to align them with a CA or CCA for the purpose of transferring PCC functions to a mayor

Where functions are transferred to a mayoral CA or CCA (even for a single force), the mayor must appoint a deputy mayor for policing and crime.

Taken together, these provisions will probably result in several existing and planned mayoral CA and CCAs taking on the functions of PCCs in the coming years.

Committee debate and amendments

Only minor technical amendments were made to these provisions at committee and there was little debate.

Giving oral evidence to the public bill committee, both Tracy Brabin (Lab), Mayor of West Yorkshire and Donna Jones (Con), Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner, suggested that mayors that delivered PCC functions could achieve better collaboration between local agencies which led to better outcomes.¹⁹⁷

Lord Houchen of High Leven (Con), mayor of Tees Valley, described himself as “one of the exceptions among pretty much all the mayors that are currently elected” in not supporting the transfer of PCC powers to mayors. He said mayors worked best with a “very narrow remit, which is largely economic regeneration, investment and job creation.” He said he would support giving mayors more powers over these economic matters, rather than widening responsibility to police and fire services.¹⁹⁸

In written evidence, Simon Foster, West Midlands PCC, opposed the measures, stating that the government was:

[...] legislating to solve a problem that does not exist and instead is creating legislation, that reduces the democratic and political legitimacy of the transfer of PCC powers to MCAs, by removing the requirement for there to be democratic local support for the transfer.¹⁹⁹

He recommended removing the clauses.

There was little debate on these provisions at committee stage.

Vikki Slade moved amendments that would have required any transition of PCC functions to mayors under these proposed powers to be subject to greater parliamentary scrutiny, by applying the affirmative procedure to

¹⁹⁷ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Second sitting\)](#), 16 September 2025, c47-48

¹⁹⁸ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Second sitting\)](#), 16 September 2025, c48

¹⁹⁹ [Written evidence submitted by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner \(EDCEB47\)](#) (PDF), 28 October 2025

secondary legislation made under the provisions (rather than the negative procedure, as currently proposed).²⁰⁰ She withdrew the amendments.

Vikki Slade also moved an amendment that would have removed the provision to require mayors to appoint a deputy mayor to manage policing and crime for their area. She said that anyone performing the functions of police and crime commissioners should be “elected persons of the area” and not “a mayoral appointment”.²⁰¹ The amendment was not voted on.

The government made several minor technical amendments to clause 44 largely to correct drafting errors.²⁰² It also made minor amendments to schedule 21, including to specify that a person could not be appointed a deputy mayor for policing and crime for more than one police force area.²⁰³

All government amendments were agreed to without division.

Further developments: abolition of PCCs

In addition to the measures in the bill, [the government announced on 13 November 2025 that PCCs will be abolished completely](#) when their current terms end in May 2028.²⁰⁴

At that point, where PCC functions have not already transferred to an elected mayor (under either existing processes or those proposed in this bill) they will automatically do so.

If there are no relevant mayoral CA or CCAs, functions will be transferred to new police and crime boards to oversee policing in that area. Sarah Jones, Policing Minister, said these boards would be in place “until such time as mayors are in place in England” and would consist of:

- local authority upper-tier leaders
- co-opted members with appropriate skills and experience, and
- mayors if they are in the police force’s area.²⁰⁵

The Policing Minister also said the boards would be:

[...] supported by a policing and crime lead, akin to a deputy mayor for policing and crime, to carry out day to day activities on their behalf. This will

²⁰⁰ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, c360

²⁰¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, c363

²⁰² [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, c361

²⁰³ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, c366

²⁰⁴ Home Office, [Police and crime commissioners to be scrapped](#), 13 November 2025; Written statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025; Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025.

²⁰⁵ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c335

mean that every area will have a visible, nominated lead who will be dedicated to the oversight of policing in their area.²⁰⁶

As well as helping to deliver its devolution policy agenda, the commitment is part of the government's wider programme of police reform. It has committed to publish a police reform white paper before the end of 2025.²⁰⁷ This is expected to include various proposals on changes to police structures, procurement and workforce and will probably provide more detailed information on the abolition of PCCs.²⁰⁸

Abolishing PCCs would require primary legislation to amend the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#), though it is not clear when this will be introduced.

3.8 Fire services

Clauses 46-47 and schedule 22 of the bill would establish a new route for the Secretary of State to determine that a mayoral CA or CCA will take on the functions of the fire and rescue authority for their area. This could be done where the combined authority boundary aligns with one or more fire and rescue service boundaries.

Background

There are 44 fire and rescue services in England. Each service is overseen by a fire and rescue authority, as set out in the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).

Depending on the area, the fire and rescue authority can be a function of different agencies. In summary:

- a local authority can be the fire authority if it shares its boundaries with a fire and rescue service.
- a stand-alone combined fire authority can be formed if the fire service's boundary stretches across more than one local authority. This can be comprised of elected councillors appointed by the leaders of each constituent council.
- a mayoral CA or CCA can be the fire and rescue authority where boundaries align.
- the PCC can become the fire and rescue authority (known as the police, crime and fire commissioner) where boundaries align with the police force.

²⁰⁶ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c335

²⁰⁷ Oral statement, [Police Reform](#), 13 November 2025, c338

²⁰⁸ [The white paper was first announced in November 2024](#), by the then Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

- in London, the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) is the fire and rescue authority. The LFC is appointed by the Mayor of London.

At the time of writing, Greater Manchester and North Yorkshire combined authorities are the fire and rescue authorities for their area. PCCs hold fire and rescue functions in Essex, Cumbria, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire.

Part 1 of the 2004 act sets out the different agencies that can be the fire and rescue authority in their area. The [Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009](#) enables the government to transfer fire and rescue authority functions to the mayor of a combined authority through secondary legislation.

The Secretary of State can only introduce the necessary secondary legislation if either: the combined authority (or councils seeking to establish a new combined authority) has submitted a formal proposal for the transfer; or if the government wishes to make the transfer and secures the consent of the combined authority.

The bill would amend the 2004 act to establish a new route for the Secretary of State to transfer fire and rescue authority functions to the mayor of a CA or CCA without requiring their consent.

Committee debate and amendments

The government tabled amendments to clause 46 and schedule 22 to change how fire and rescue authority functions can be transferred to a mayoral CA or CCA.²⁰⁹

The bill as introduced required that a mayoral CA or CCA must first be coterminous with one or more fire and rescue authorities for a transition to take place. If it were, the Secretary of State could introduce secondary legislation to state when a transfer should take place. This was modelled on similar powers in the bill to transfer police and crime functions.

However, the government has determined that there is no longer a need for the legislation to specify that a mayoral CA or CCA must first be coterminous with fire and rescue authorities.

This is because, unlike police force boundaries (which are set out in [schedule 1 of the Police Act 1996](#)), the precise boundaries of fire and rescue authority areas are not specified in legislation. Instead, [under section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), the fire and rescue authority area is simply that of the local body delivering the fire and rescue authority functions.

These amendments to clause 46 and schedule 22 simplify the proposed process for transfers by removing the requirement that the mayoral CA or CCA and the fire and rescue service authority must first be coterminous. Instead, the Secretary of State would be able to simply introduce secondary

²⁰⁹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, cc367-369

legislation to state that a mayoral CA or CCA will become the fire and rescue authority for its area, and specify the date that will take place.

These amendments were agreed to without division.

The government also introduced a further amendment to schedule 22.²¹⁰ This relates to provisions under clause 9 and schedule 3 (which were also subject to minor government amendments agreed by the committee).²¹¹

Taken together, these amendments would allow a mayor to delegate some functions related to the fire and rescue authority but only to a public safety commissioner (a mayor could designate the deputy mayor for policing and crime as the public safety commissioner).²¹² The mayor must retain full responsibility for certain strategic functions, such as setting the budget, publishing the risk plan and appointing the chief fire officer. The full list of responsibilities that could not be delegated to a public safety commissioner are set out in schedule 3 of the bill (paragraph 7, in schedule 2A). These amendments were agreed to without division.

There was only one opposition amendment on these provisions, tabled by Vikki Slade. She was concerned over the lack of attention given to fire and rescue services in the bill and said that Parliament should therefore have greater scrutiny over any subsequent changes to fire and rescue authorities made under delegated powers in the bill.

Mirroring her proposals on clause 44, she proposed an amendment that would require any transition of a fire and rescue authority to a mayor to be subject to affirmative procedure (rather than the negative procedure, as currently proposed). Explaining the rationale for her amendment, she said:

To add fire and rescue services in as a couple of pages in a large Bill feels inadequate, which is why we are looking to ensure that regulations made under clause 46 are subject to the affirmative procedure, and why we are seeking more parliamentary scrutiny and energy around bringing in the fire and rescue services, particularly where they do not align.

The amendment was rejected by 11 votes to 3.²¹³

Inspections of mayoral combined authority or CCAs which are fire and rescue services

The Commons agreed a government Lords amendment to clarify what matters HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

²¹⁰ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, c372

²¹¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Fourth sitting\)](#), 14 October 2025 c158-159

²¹² The appointment of commissioners would be legislated for in clause 2 of this bill.

²¹³ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(Eighth sitting\)](#), 21 October 2025, c370

(HMICFRS) can review when inspecting a mayoral CA or CCA that is a fire and rescue authority.²¹⁴

This act makes it easier for the government to transfer fire and rescue authority functions to a mayoral CA or CCA.²¹⁵ All fire and rescue authorities in England must be inspected by HMICFRS.²¹⁶

Lords amendment 142 prevents HMICFRS from reviewing the governance-related functions of a mayoral CA or CCA that is the fire and rescue authority (such as issuing the community risk management plan or allocating the budget). It effectively limits HMICFRS to inspect only operational matters under the control of the chief fire officer.

Similar limitations on inspections already apply in respect of police and crime commissioners that become the fire and rescue authority (known as police, fire and crime commissioners).²¹⁷ The government said this amendment was a “technical amendment” that would “align inspection frameworks across governance models”.²¹⁸

The amendment was tabled initially at committee stage but was withdrawn after debate.²¹⁹ It was tabled again at report stage and agreed without division.²²⁰ The Commons agreed the Lords amendment without debate.²²¹

Government amendments to schedule 23 in the House of Lords bring mayoral fire and rescue authorities within the ‘section 114’ regime. This provides an authority’s chief financial officer with a procedure to issue a report if they have specific financial concerns (see section 1.2 of the Library briefing [Local authority financial resilience](#) for more information).

3.9

Gambling impact assessments

The [Gambling Act 2005](#) regulates gambling in Great Britain. The act has three licensing objectives:

- preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime

²¹⁴ [HC Deb 21 April 2026](#)

²¹⁵ For background information on these measures, see the Library briefings [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-25](#) (section 3.12) and [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2024-26: progress of the bill](#) (section 3.8) for more information.

²¹⁶ [Section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#); HMICFRS, [Fire and rescue services](#)

²¹⁷ [Section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) (as amended) and the [Fire and Rescue Authority \(Police and Crime Commissioner\) \(Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments\) Order 2017](#)

²¹⁸ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 cc 19GC-22GC](#)

²¹⁹ Committee stage amendment 172, [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c22GC](#)

²²⁰ Report stage amendment 136, [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1704](#)

²²¹ Lords amendment 142, [HC Deb 21 April 2026](#)

- ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
- protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling²²²

The act places a legal duty on the [Gambling Commission](#) (the regulator under the 2005 act) and local authorities to aim to permit gambling, “in so far as it is considered to be reasonably consistent with the pursuit of the licensing objectives”.²²³

Concerns about the clustering of gambling premises

The 2005 act abolished an earlier “demand test” for granting licences to open new gambling premises. This has led to concerns about the “clustering” of betting shops.

In its July 2020 report, a House of Lords Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry criticised the “clustering” of betting shops in disadvantaged areas.²²⁴ It found that the “liberalisation of the regulation of gambling” had led to an “increased presence of gambling services on the high street”.²²⁵ The committee recommended that the 2005 act “should be amended to give licensing committees deciding on the licensing of premises for gambling the same powers as they already have when deciding on the licensing of premises for the sale of alcohol”.²²⁶

A gambling white paper was published in April 2023.²²⁷ This included a commitment to “align the regimes for alcohol and gambling licensing by introducing cumulative impact assessments”.²²⁸ The primary legislation that this would require was not introduced before the 2024 general election.

There are ongoing concerns about the concentration of betting shops and adult gaming centres in certain areas. Brent Council, for example, has been campaigning for local authorities to be given the power to reject license applications that threaten a “community’s welfare and safety”.²²⁹

²²² [Section 1 of the 2005 act](#)

²²³ Gambling Commission, [Guidance to licensing authorities - statutory aim to permit gambling](#), April 2023 (accessed 23 April 2026)

²²⁴ Lords Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry, [Gambling harm - time for action](#) (HL Paper 79) (PDF), July 2020 (accessed 23 April 2026)

²²⁵ As above, para 110

²²⁶ See: Library briefing, [Alcohol licensing: cumulative impact assessments](#) and Home Office, [Guidance for local authorities](#) (PDF), February 2026, pages 107-13 (accessed 23 April 2026)

²²⁷ Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), [High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age](#), April 2023 (accessed 23 April 2026)

²²⁸ DCMS, [High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age](#), Land-based gambling

²²⁹ [Letter from the Leader of Brent Council to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport](#) (PDF), 2 April 2025; [London borough's war on gambling as addicts cost it over £14m a year](#), Standard [online], 9 March 2025 (both accessed 23 April 2026)

In a written parliamentary response of 19 November 2025, the government said it had no plans to review the 2005 act's "aim to permit" provision.²³⁰ However, it would introduce cumulative impact assessments when parliamentary time allowed.

The bill

At report stage in the House of Lords on 13 April 2026, the government moved amendment 305 to the bill.²³¹ This would amend the 2005 act to enable licensing authorities to issue gambling impact assessments. Baroness Taylor of Stevenage explained that an assessment could "set out that granting a licence for gambling premises in specific areas is not likely to be reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives".²³² However, applications for premises licences would still have to be considered on a case by case basis:

[Gambling impact assessments] must be based on evidence showing that premises in a specific area risk undermining the licensing objectives; for example, by causing harm to children or other vulnerable people. This evidence must be published in the assessment.

We anticipate that gambling impact assessments will apply predominantly in areas where licensing authorities want to limit the granting of further gambling premises licences on cumulative impact grounds. However, it will also be possible to prevent the granting of a single licence in a specific area if the licensing authority believes there is evidence to show that this would not be likely to be consistent with the licensing objectives. This will help licensing authorities to more easily limit the number of gambling premises licences in their areas where this is justified.

Where gambling impact assessments apply, licensing authorities can adopt a policy that they will not grant any new premises licences in the areas covered by the assessment. However, this is in no way a blanket ban. Each application for a premises licence must be considered on a case-by-case basis, and a licensing authority would be required to grant a licence if the applicant provides evidence to show that the licence would be reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives.²³³

Amendment 305 was agreed without a division.²³⁴

The amendment was welcomed when the bill returned to the House of Commons and it was agreed without a division on 21 April 2026.²³⁵

²³⁰ [PQ 89873 \[on strengthening the ability of local authorities to limit gambling harms\]](#), answered 19 November 2025

²³¹ [HL Deb 13 April 2026 cc165-8](#)

²³² [HL Deb 13 April 2026 c167](#)

²³³ [HL Deb 13 April 2026 c167](#)

²³⁴ [HL Deb 13 April 2026 c169](#)

²³⁵ It became amendment 80 of [Bill 424](#) (PDF) and was agreed at [HC Deb 21 April 2026 c295](#)

3.10

Licensing functions for the Mayor of London

The government tabled a new clause 44 at report stage, which would add a new schedule 2 to the bill. This would amend the [Licensing Act 2003](#) to give licensing functions to the Mayor of London.²³⁶

Background: the Licensing Act 2003

The [Licensing Act 2003](#) applies to the sale and supply of alcohol in England and Wales. The act has four licensing objectives:

- the prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- the prevention of public nuisance
- the protection of children from harm

Under the act, a [premises licence](#) is usually required for the sale of alcohol, the provision of regulated entertainment, and the provision of late night refreshment. These are issued by the licensing authority in which a premises is situated.

Objections can be raised against an application for a new licence or a variation of an existing licence. It is also possible to trigger a review of an existing licence. The 2003 act, and associated regulations and guidance, do not use the term “objections”, but rather “representations”. All representations must be relevant to at least one of the licensing objectives.

Home Office [statutory guidance for licensing authorities](#) (PDF) gives detailed information on the licensing objectives, premises licences, the representations that may be made, how applications are decided, and the conditions that can be attached to licences.²³⁷

Gov.uk gives a summary of [how the licensing framework operates](#).

Government announcement on Mayor of London licensing powers

In an April 2025 press release, the government announced that the Mayor of London would be given new powers to “review blocked licensing applications

²³⁶ New schedule 2 is set out on pages 34-7 of the [amendment paper for the bill](#) (PDF), 19 November 2025

²³⁷ See chapters 2, 8-11 and 13 of the [Home Office guidance](#) (PDF), February 2025 (accessed 18 November 2025)

and boost the capital's nighttime economy".²³⁸ The press release said that a pilot scheme "could see more alfresco dining and later opening hours in London, as the Mayor of London is granted new "call in" powers to review blocked licensing applications in nightlife hotspots".²³⁹ If successful, the government said that the approach could be rolled out to other mayors across England.²⁴⁰

Angela Rayner, then Deputy Prime Minister, said that pubs, restaurants, and live music venues were "the beating heart of our cultural life, so it is vital they are given every chance to survive and thrive":

That's why it's time to give the Mayor of London new powers to back the capital's pubs and clubs, as part of our plan to give mayors the tools they need to drive growth. Too often, we have seen the complaints of a vocal minority of objectors promoted over the need for our country to grow - we are determined to change this.²⁴¹

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, said he was "delighted" that the government was looking to grant London greater powers over licensing:

This significant decision would allow us to do more to support the capital's pubs, clubs, music venues and other parts of the visit and tourist scene. It would boost tourism, stimulate growth and deliver new jobs both in London and across the country.

This is more evidence that we now have a government that wants to work with the capital and recognises the role that we can play in delivering economic prosperity and support Londoners as we build a better London for everyone.²⁴²

The government's announcement on new powers for the Mayor of London was welcomed by, among others, the Musicians Union (MU). Kelly Wood, MU National Organiser for Live, Theatre and Music Writers, commented:

This is potentially great news for the live sector, and could help to protect our members' opportunities to perform and develop audiences.

We've seen the impact of unfair and restrictive licensing, which threatens both musicians' careers and residents' access to diverse cultural experiences. As this is a problem that exists beyond the boroughs of London, we'd love to see such powers extended to other areas too.²⁴³

²³⁸ [Government calls 'last orders' on red tape choking pubs, clubs, and restaurants in major boost to the British night out](#), 4 April 2025 (accessed 18 November 2025)

²³⁹ As above

²⁴⁰ As above

²⁴¹ As above

²⁴² As above

²⁴³ [Government trials pilot scheme to boost London night-time economy](#), Musicians' Union news, 9 April 2025 (accessed 18 November 2025)

London Assembly analysis (August 2025)

In August 2025, the London Assembly published analysis showing that if the Mayor of London had licensing powers, it could boost London's economy by around £2bn a year.²⁴⁴

According to the analysis, there were nearly 2,400 new applications for premises licences in London in 2023/24, with 82% granted compared to 91% across England and Wales.²⁴⁵ It claimed that London's nighttime economy was under pressure from "rising costs and bureaucratic red tape" with the licensing system being a "big part" of this. Venues often saw the current system as "inconsistent, lacking transparency, and overly weighted toward objections".²⁴⁶

The analysis said that cities in other countries had reformed their licensing systems without following a borough-level licensing model. Evidence showed that a strategic city-wide authority or governing entity was effective at managing risks. The analysis cited New York as an example:

...the Mayor of New York has considerable influence over licensing rules and regulations compared to London. New York's Mayor can set licensing policy priorities, propose changes to state laws that govern licensing, appoint key officials in licensing-related agencies, and launch initiatives to support SMEs and other businesses in need...²⁴⁷

The bill

Commons report stage

At report stage in the House of Commons, the government tabled new clause 44 that would add a new schedule 2 to the bill. This would amend the Licensing Act 2003 to give licensing functions to the Mayor of London.²⁴⁸

The amendments to the 2003 act would require the Mayor of London to publish a strategic licensing policy in relation to the carrying out of relevant licensable activities in Greater London. The policy would be for a five-year period, but the mayor would have to keep it under review and make revisions when it was considered appropriate to do so. Before determining a policy, the mayor would have to consult:

- the chief officer of police for the area of each London licensing authority

²⁴⁴ [New analysis shows changes to licensing in London could boost the economy by billions as Mayor celebrates opening of latest al fresco West End dining hotspot](#), Greater London Assembly press release, 22 August 2025 (accessed 19 November 2025)

²⁴⁵ Greater London Authority, [Devolution licensing powers to the GLA - Context, challenges and opportunities](#) (PDF), August 2025, p1 (accessed 19 November 2025)

²⁴⁶ As above, p2

²⁴⁷ As above, p3

²⁴⁸ New schedule 2 was set out on pages 34-7 of the [amendment paper for the bill](#) (PDF), 19 November 2025

- each Local Health Board for an area, any part of which was in a London licensing authority
- people that the mayor considered to be representative of holders of premises licences issued by each London licensing authority
- other people that the mayor considered to be representative of businesses and residents in each London licensing authority
- the Secretary of State
- each London licensing authority

When determining or revising a policy, the mayor would have to consider:

- the primary importance of promoting the licensing objectives, and
- any requirements imposed on licensing authorities when carrying out their licensing functions

When carrying its licensing functions, a London licensing authority would have to take account of the Mayor of London's licensing policy statement. Before determining or revising its policy for a five-year period, a London licensing authority would also have to consult the mayor.

New schedule 2 would also enable the Secretary of State, through regulations, to confer on the mayor the function of determining relevant licence applications in "certain circumstances". A relevant licence application would be an application under the 2003 act to grant, vary, transfer or review a premises licence in Greater London which authorised the premises to be used for one or more of the following "relevant licensable activities":

- the sale by retail of alcohol
- the provision of regulated entertainment within the meaning of schedule 1 to the 2003 act
- the provision of late-night refreshment within the meaning of schedule 2 to the 2003 act

The regulations would be subject to the affirmative procedure.

Lords committee stage

The provisions added at report stage in the Commons became clause 50 and schedule 24 to the bill as introduced in the House of Lords.

When clause 50 was considered in committee on 9 February 2026, the government moved amendments 174 to 181.²⁴⁹ For the government, Baroness Taylor of Stevenage explained their purpose:

...Amendments introduced on Report in the other place established a new strategic licensing role for the Mayor of London...There was also an amendment that served as a placeholder for a new call-in power, which provided the Secretary of State with the power to make regulations to confer on the Mayor of London the function of determining relevant licence applications in certain circumstances. Government Amendments 174 to 181 replace this placeholder and provide more detail around the types of circumstances in which the mayor may call in or determine relevant licence applications.²⁵⁰

The minister further explained:

...The amendments also add the Greater London Authority as a responsible authority in certain circumstances under Part 3 of the Licensing Act 2003. They place a requirement on the GLA to notify interested parties, including the applicant and the relevant licensing authority, of applications that the GLA considers to meet the definition of potential strategic importance to Greater London. This will be set out in regulations by the Secretary of State. If a London licensing authority decides not to grant an application of potential strategic importance as applied for, including, for example, by rejecting the application or applying additional conditions to it, the mayor is required to decide whether or not to call in the decision.

If a decision is called in, the mayor must issue a direction to the relevant licensing authority, having given regard to his licensing policy and the importance of promoting the licensing objectives. New rights of appeal in relation to directions issued by the mayor will also be introduced to help ensure the call-in power is used judiciously.²⁵¹

The minister said that the new call-in power would initially be introduced in London. However, it could be deployed in other mayoralties in the future to “help prevent decisions from being blocked by unnecessary red tape or short-term thinking”.²⁵²

Baroness Taylor emphasised that the amendments only related to the licensing regime in Greater London and were not national licensing reforms.²⁵³ At a national level, a [joint government and industry licensing taskforce](#) had sought views on a package of proposals last year. There were over 2,000 responses to the call for evidence. The minister said the government would be considering these before making any future reforms to the national licensing regime, including on aspects such as pavement licensing.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ The amendments are set out on pp13-7 in the [sixth marshalled list of amendments to be moved in Grand Committee](#) (PDF)

²⁵⁰ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c22GC](#)

²⁵¹ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c22GC](#)

²⁵² [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c22GC](#)

²⁵³ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 cc22-3GC](#)

²⁵⁴ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 cc22-3GC](#)

Concerns were raised about the amendments during the debate. Baroness O'Neill (Conservative) cautioned that the mayor “might not appreciate local circumstances”. She also said that the current scrutiny of the mayor was “not considered to be effective”, that devolution should mean “respect for decision-making at its lowest common denominator” (borough level in the case of licensing), and that if a more strategic decision was needed for a wider area, the decision should include the local decision-making processes or partners.²⁵⁵

Baroness Pinnock (Liberal Democrat) said she understood the need for a global city such as London to “reverse...the direction of devolution and enable a power grab from the local boroughs in some circumstances”.²⁵⁶ However, she said that the bill did not define the circumstances, other than that they had to be of “strategic importance” across Greater London, that the definition of “strategic importance” would be set out in regulations, and that it wasn't clear how the mayor would make decisions when they had been defined as being of strategic importance.²⁵⁷ Baroness Pinnock also questioned what would happen if a decision was called in:

... if there is a veto and it is called in by the mayor, how quickly will the mayor decide? What is the democratic way in which that will be decided? Is it just the mayor in his or her office making a decision, or will it go to a scrutiny committee for discussion first? Will there be an open and transparent hearing where the local borough council—or several local borough councils, if it is something that affects several of them—can come and explain its decision? Will the mayor have to explain why it has been called in? A lot here is unsatisfactory, to say the least...²⁵⁸

Lord Jamieson, the Shadow Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, said that he was not opposed to a greater strategic role for the GLA and the mayor, particularly where that would help to identify key applications and promote consistency across London.²⁵⁹ However, he was not persuaded that the mayor should be granted “such extensive powers to intervene in and potentially overrule decisions taken by local licensing authorities”:

Although applicants will have the right of appeal, these provisions introduce a new layer of bureaucracy and uncertainty into what is already a complex licensing regime. We struggle to see why the mayor should be given such a decisive and potentially determinative role in local licensing decisions, particularly where those decisions are currently taken by local authorities with detailed knowledge of their communities...The mayor will not have that, and we are overriding local accountability.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c23GC](#)

²⁵⁶ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c23GC](#)

²⁵⁷ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c23GC](#)

²⁵⁸ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c24GC](#)

²⁵⁹ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c25GC](#)

²⁶⁰ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c28GC](#)

In response to the concerns that had been raised, Baroness Taylor said it was clear that there was “more work to do before moving forward”. She withdrew the government’s amendments.²⁶¹

Lords report stage

At report stage on 26 March 2026, Baroness Taylor of Stevenage moved government amendment 139 to clause 50 and amendments 141 to 147 to schedule 24.

The minister explained that London licensing authorities would remain the “default licensing decision-makers in Greater London”.²⁶² The mayor would be able to “call in” decisions made by a London licensing authority only on applications of potential strategic importance to Greater London and in a limited set of circumstances. Even then, the mayor could decide to uphold the decision of the licensing authority.²⁶³

The minister said that the GLA had launched a consultation on the new London-wide strategic licensing policy. This would help to inform the criteria by which the Secretary of State would be responsible for setting out in regulations what “potential strategic importance” would mean. The government would engage further with London borough councils and other licensing stakeholders before laying the regulations, as well as any other statutory instruments that would be needed to determine the procedural elements of the call-in process.²⁶⁴

Baroness Taylor explained that the government’s amendments would establish some “important parameters” that would prevent the mayor from “encroaching on local licensing authorities’ decision-making unnecessarily”:

...This includes preventing the mayor rejecting an application that would otherwise have been granted by a London licensing authority, reflecting our intention to establish a clearly defined role for the mayor in promoting London-wide strategic objectives to drive growth in London’s sporting, cultural, hospitality and nightlife sectors. The call-in power is intended to be used as a measure of last resort and only in specific circumstances—effective as much in its existence as in its use—to encourage a more enabling and joined-up approach to licensing across the capital.²⁶⁵

Responding to concerns that had been raised in committee, Baroness Taylor said she was “acutely aware that large urban areas cannot be treated as homogeneous”.²⁶⁶ She recognised that the licensing priorities of inner and outer London boroughs will vary significantly, as will their demographics and local policing capacities.²⁶⁷ However, she said there was no “no inherent

²⁶¹ [HL Deb 9 February 2026 c28GC](#)

²⁶² [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1706](#)

²⁶³ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1706](#)

²⁶⁴ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 cc1706-7](#)

²⁶⁵ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1707](#)

²⁶⁶ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1707](#)

²⁶⁷ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1707](#)

contradiction” between this and establishing new strategic licensing functions at mayoral level:

...When determining strategic licensing policy, for example, the mayor will be under a duty to have regard to the requirements on local licensing authorities when carrying out their licensing functions—including, for example, the setting of local licensing policies—as well as locally published cumulative impact assessments. The mayor will be required to state his reasons for giving any direction to ensure an appropriate level of transparency. New rights of appeal against mayoral directions will also be established to mitigate against improper use of the call-in power. The Government will monitor the new strategic licensing measures, and the Secretary of State will be able to repeal the measures up to five years after they come into force.

I must conclude by emphasising that licensing decisions are, by their nature, nuanced judgments. They involve weighing competing factors and exercising discretion, rather than arriving at a binary outcome. Through the piloting of new strategic licensing measures in Greater London, our intention is to give greater weight to economic growth and the reputational importance of London’s hospitality and nightlife sectors, while recognising the importance of promoting the licensing objectives to help ensure that people’s local concerns are protected.²⁶⁸

Amendments 141 to 147 were agreed without a division.²⁶⁹

Consideration of Lords amendments

The bill returned to the House of Commons on 21 April 2026.

The minister, Miatta Fahnbulleh, reassured Members representing London that the evidence provided by licensing authorities would “have a significant role in both the design of the policy and the determination of potential strategic importance”.²⁷⁰

The minister “put on the record” that the government’s amendments would be “embedded in the Licensing Act 2003”.²⁷¹ This means that the licensing objectives that “seek to protect and safeguard local communities will apply, and the mayor will be required to have regard to them when exercising the powers conferred through the amendment”:

...The Government are incredibly clear that there must be the right balance between encouraging the growth of hospitality and the night-time economy, which we want to do, and protecting the needs of local communities and their places. The safeguarding and reassurance that are required are locked into the way that we have designed this policy. As I have said, local licensing authorities will continue to be the default decision makers, so the mayor must have regard to the evidence that they provide to determine the decisions that they make. Finally and crucially, where cumulative impact zones have been

²⁶⁸ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1707](#)

²⁶⁹ [HL Deb 26 March 2026 c1721](#)

²⁷⁰ [HC Deb 21 April 2026 c240](#)

²⁷¹ [HC Deb 21 April 2026 c240](#)

designated by boroughs, this will remain the case, and the mayor must have regard to the cumulative impact assessment.²⁷²

The amendments were agreed without a division.²⁷³

²⁷² [HC Deb 21 April 2026 c240](#)

²⁷³ Amendments 34 and 144 to 150 of [Bill 424](#) (PDF), agreed at [HC Deb 21 April 2026 c295](#)

4 Local government changes

4.1 Unitary local government

Pages 100 to 102 of the English Devolution white paper set out initial plans for a large-scale programme of unitary restructuring in England. The bill includes provisions to enable the Secretary of State to mandate reorganisation, which is not possible using current legislation.

On 6 February 2025 the government issued an invitation to reorganise to all two-tier areas and neighbouring unitary authorities in England.²⁷⁴ The authorities were asked to submit interim proposals for unitary authorities by 21 March 2025. Those on the Devolution Priority Programme were required to submit final proposals by 26 September 2025.²⁷⁵ Other areas were required to submit final proposals by 28 November 2025.

The legal process in the 2007 Act permits different local authorities in an area to submit different proposals for new unitary authorities. The government's invitation letter to councils said that, wherever possible, a single, agreed proposal for each area should be submitted.²⁷⁶ Authorities were permitted to submit proposals that used existing council areas as 'building blocks', but also to propose changes in boundaries, if a strong case for this could be made.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has collated policy papers and letters related to local government reorganisation on a single web page - [Local government reorganisation: Policy and programme updates](#).

Debate at committee stage

The Government's plans to establish unitary local government throughout the two-tier areas of England provoked debate within the bill committee. Some members advocated unitary local government whilst others opposed it. The

²⁷⁴ MHCLG, [Local government reorganisation: invitation to local authorities in two-tier areas](#), 6 Feb 2025

²⁷⁵ These proposals have been collated by the Local Government Association at a publicly-available shared drive location: [LGR DPP proposals](#). They cover Norfolk and Suffolk; Hampshire and Solent; Essex; West and East Sussex.

²⁷⁶ MHCLG, [Local government reorganisation: invitation to local authorities in two-tier areas](#), 6 Feb 2025

committee agreed to retain clause 55 (referring to the relevant legislation in schedule 24) in the bill by nine votes to four.²⁷⁷

The bill includes provisions that would permit the Secretary of State to initiate proposals for unitary local government in a locality. As the law stands, a reorganisation process can only begin when one or more local authorities submit a proposal, and the government cannot compel them to do this. At committee stage, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

We are committed to working in partnership with local areas. Therefore, this [power to initiate proposals] will be used only where areas have failed to make progress following an invitation. It also includes new merging provisions to enable existing unitary councils that believe structural change would be beneficial to submit proposals for reorganisation. That aligns the process for reorganising single-tier areas with the current process for reorganising two-tier areas.²⁷⁸

For the Conservatives, Paul Holmes suggested that claims of efficiency and savings arising from unitarization were not guaranteed:

The other reason why we oppose the clause is because there is no overwhelming evidence showing that services or local government would be more efficient with larger organisational structures and a larger population being encapsulated into unitary authorities. I am a big fan of unitary authorities—I declare an interest in that I am a former lead member of one, and I was very happy to be so—but we have to accept that the nature of devolution means that a standardised model is not adequate for everywhere in the country. In some areas, it may not be what is best or wanted by local people.²⁷⁹

Sian Berry suggested that making increased funds available to local authorities was more urgent than reorganisation:

One point that is important to make is that there is no strong case for this change on cost or service delivery grounds. There is no consistent or conclusive evidence to justify a belief that the much larger councils that the Government want will result in services that are cheaper to run. Why even force attempts at savings of this sort now, when local government is still struggling so badly? Research from Unison has shown that councils across England, Wales and Scotland are facing a collective funding shortfall of £4 billion by the financial year of 2026-27, and a cumulative funding gap of £7.4 billion by 2027-28. Let us please fix austerity first.²⁸⁰

Population of new authorities

The government has stated that new unitary councils should have a population in the vicinity of 500,000, though this is a “guiding principle”

²⁷⁷ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c405

²⁷⁸ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c390

²⁷⁹ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c391

²⁸⁰ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c396

rather than a minimum.²⁸¹ Lewis Cocking, for the Conservatives, questioned why metropolitan councils were not to be reorganised when their populations are often well below the figure of 500,000:

...all the councils that I have looked into that have gone through reorganisation have set up delivery mechanisms and organigrams of staffs and departments based on the old district boundaries. They all have area planning committees that all have to be costed and so on. A number of reports include farcical figures claiming that an area will save millions and millions from going through the reorganisation, because of redundancies, and better and joined-up services.

...

If it is good for parts of the country, I hope that the Minister can explain why London and lots of the metropolitan boroughs in the north are not being compelled to reorganise. If this 500,000 figure is the sweet spot and the Government have loads of evidence to back that the claim that this will make services more efficient and put councils on a better financial footing, why is it good for only certain parts of the country, and not the whole country?²⁸²

A report in The Times on 28 October 2025 suggested that the government was considering moving away from the 500,000 figure:

Ministers are understood to have reviewed evidence and accepted that more medium-sized authorities of between 200,000 and 250,000 people may end up being the most cost-effective.

Expanding city boundaries is set to form part of [the Secretary of State's] plans to reach the [government's 1.5 million new homes] target. Nottingham city council, for example, has consistently beaten its housing targets but is surrounded by district councils which tend to fall short. A similar dynamic has been blamed for high house prices in Oxford and the struggle for Plymouth to expand to accommodate a large influx of new jobs from defence investment.²⁸³

A report from the District Councils' Network, published on 20 October 2025, stated that "there is little or no evidence to support a preference for large unitary councils and no evidence to support the 500k population level"; and that "the bulk of the data [that we have] analysed shows a non-existent or faint relationship between a council's population and its outcomes".²⁸⁴

Other boundary matters

Paul Holmes introduced an amendment that would have permitted the Secretary of State to invite or direct an authority to propose to split itself into two or more parts. Miatta Fahnbulleh rejected the amendment:

²⁸¹ MHCLG, [Local government reorganisation: invitation to local authorities in two-tier areas](#), 6 Feb 2025

²⁸² PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c400, 402

²⁸³ Max Kendix, [City boundaries to be expanded in crackdown on nimby councils](#), The Times, 28 Oct 2025

²⁸⁴ District Councils Network, [No evidence exists to support mega councils, study reveals](#), 20 Oct 2025

We are clear that, on the other side of local government reorganisation, councils must be the right size to deliver the high-quality services that residents deserve and need. Judgment on proposals will be driven by that fundamental question. Splitting up existing unitaries, further fragmenting and disaggregating services, does not feel like it would be in the interests of the residents concerned in delivering better and more efficient services.²⁸⁵

Manuela Perteghella, for the Liberal Democrats, introduced an amendment that would have required new unitary authority boundaries to take account of various matters, including physical geography, patterns of public service provision, and community identity. Pual Holmes introduced an amendment that would have required a referendum to approve reorganisation in any given local area. He also tabled an amendment that would have required the Secretary of State to report after two years on each unitary reorganisation, including the cost of the reorganisation, the impact on service delivery and development, the sustainability of the new authority's finances, and residents' satisfaction.²⁸⁶ The Minister, Miatta Fahnbulleh, rejected all three amendments, saying in respect of the latter one:

...there is no need for the Secretary of State to publish a report after the implementation of every single reorganisation proposal. Ultimately, local authorities are responsible for their own financial performance and the delivery of their local services, and they are accountable to their local electorate. As many currently do, local authorities may report on their performance each year to their electorate. That is the appropriate place for the responsibility to lie.²⁸⁷

The committee rejected this amendment by 9 votes to 4.²⁸⁸

Local authorities with substantial debts

A small number of local authorities in areas that are to be reorganised have substantial unsecured debts. After reorganisation, the default position would be that the successor councils inherited the debt. Many stakeholders have expressed concern that successor councils in that position would be unviable from the point at which they were established. Marie Goldman MP made this point at second reading:

The really important point is that Greater Essex contains Thurrock, which has a very, very big debt problem: about £800 million of unsecured debt. There is no model of local government reorganisation or devolution in Greater Essex—even keeping the existing structure, frankly—that would be financially sustainable without central Government stepping in and providing funds to cover Thurrock's debt. The maths simply do not work. I am looking directly at the Minister, because we need a solution. There will be much more unity in Essex on how to move forward if we can work out how to deal with Thurrock's debt. It cannot be that other local residents, such as my constituents in

²⁸⁵ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c408

²⁸⁶ [PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025](#), cc416-7

²⁸⁷ [PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025](#), cc418-419

²⁸⁸ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c413

Chelmsford, are asked to shoulder the blame for something that they did not bring about in the first place.²⁸⁹

Woking Borough Council, in Surrey, holds between £1bn and £2bn in unsecured debt at the time of writing. In a written statement on 28 October 2025, the government announced that it had accepted a proposal to replace Surrey County Council and 11 district councils with two unitary authorities, for East and West Surrey. As part of this change, the government stated that it will provide £500 million to contribute to paying off Woking's debts:

This is a significant and unprecedented commitment given historic capital practices at the Council. It reflects our acknowledgement that, even after the rationalisation of Woking's historic assets, there is significant unsupported debt held by the Council that cannot be managed locally.²⁹⁰

At the time of writing, no equivalent statement has been made in respect of Thurrock Borough Council. If the government makes such a commitment, it is likely to accompany a decision on the future pattern of local government in Essex, likely to be announced in early to mid-2026.

4.2 Election delays

On 16 February the government then announced that it was reversing its decision to postpone elections scheduled for May 2026, and that they would go ahead. More details of this episode can be found in the Library briefing [Local government reorganisation 2026](#).

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage introduced an amendment, now clause 65, which would prevent any future delays of more than 53 weeks to local government elections owing to restructuring.²⁹¹ This followed similar amendments being tabled by Baroness Scott (Con) and Lord Pack (Lib Dem).

The government published an 'indicative timetable' on 25 July 2025 that stated that it was anticipating elections to these new unitary authorities taking place in May 2027.²⁹²

4.3 Neighbourhood governance

Clause 58 would require local authorities to establish structures of neighbourhood governance. The exact terms of these are to be determined

²⁸⁹ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c222

²⁹⁰ [HCWS 998 2024-26](#), 28 Oct 2025

²⁹¹ [HL Deb 13 Apr 2026](#) c76

²⁹² MHCLG, [Summary of the local government reorganisation process](#), 25 Jul 2025

through regulations. In the debate on this clause, Miatta Fahnbulleh said, for the government:

We are not designing the regulations in isolation; we are working closely with local government and the community sector—including the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils and the We’re Right Here campaign—to make sure that the provisions in this part of the Bill reflect how we get effective good community governance.²⁹³

A technical Government amendment was accepted to remove parish and town councils, the Isles of Scilly, and the City of London from the neighbourhood governance requirements in clause 58.

Manuela Perteghella introduced an amendment that would have required local authorities themselves to define the neighbourhoods that new governance structures would have covered. This amendment was not accepted.

At Second Reading, the then Minister, Jim McMahon, had emphasised that neighbourhood area committees were intended to complement parish and town councils:

The Bill sets out a clear ambition for all local authorities to hardwire community engagement and neighbourhood working into their governance. I do, of course, hear the calls on behalf of town and parish councils, and I share Members’ commitment to that local level, but if all we have are town and parish councils operating at a local level and no neighbourhood governance in the principal councils, we will miss the opportunity to hardwire localism in everything that councils do. We believe that we must have that hardwiring so that local people feel genuinely empowered. That is the only difference, however: this is completely compatible with town and parish councils working in partnership.²⁹⁴

Maya Ellis MP had expressed concerns that neighbourhood area committees could have unclear consequences for local representation:

First, if the committees are led by ward councillors, such councillors are political in their nature whereas parish councillors are usually apolitical. We therefore need to consider the ramifications of changing the focus of those local committees. Secondly, how do we ensure that every area is advocated for by a committed representative? How do we tangibly protect areas whose ward councillors are not active or who do not create a neighbourhood governance structure? Does that remove the ability for involved residents to form groups outside that? We all know of councillors—rare as they are, I hope—who stand for political reasons or otherwise and then do not drive things locally.²⁹⁵

At report stage in the House of Lords, Baroness Scott of Bybrook introduced an amendment (214) that would require the Secretary of State to “develop and implement a strategy for parish governance in England, particularly for areas that are currently unparished”. The Lords agreed to this amendment by

²⁹³ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c436

²⁹⁴ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c249-250

²⁹⁵ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c235

257 votes to 180.²⁹⁶ This was reversed by the Commons at ping pong. The Commons proposed an amendment to the provisions on neighbourhood committees which would specify that regulations introducing these could “provide for the membership to include one or more members representing any parish council or councils within the neighbourhood area”, which the Lords agreed to.²⁹⁷

4.4

Abolition of the committee system

The bill will require all local authorities that are using the committee system to move to a leader and cabinet model of governance. The bill will also prevent any new local authority mayoralties from being created. However, the 13 local authorities that have a directly-elected mayor will not be required to abolish the position.

Sian Berry introduced an amendment that would have excluded authorities from the requirement to end the committee system in cases where the committee system had been introduced following a referendum. This would have applied to Bristol and Sheffield City Councils. Ms Berry gave details of the consultation process in Sheffield leading up to its referendum, and suggested that the committee system allowed greater participation and more effective decision-making than the leader and cabinet model.²⁹⁸

Other Members spoke of less positive experiences of the committee system. Kevin McKenna MP said:

...my own local authority has the misfortune to operate under the committee system, which was largely brought about in a deal that created a rainbow coalition it is a dismal failure. Contrary to the evidence that has been presented, it has made the council more siloed, and fewer councillors feel that they can engage well with the council. Frankly, it is the whim of every individual committee chair as to how they operate, often constraining meetings to an extremely short duration. That has reduced the amount of scrutiny and gummed up the business of the council.²⁹⁹

For the government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

There is a question about legacy and what the transition will look like, and we have heard representations on that from my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield Central and for Sheffield Hallam. We will reflect on how to get the balance right, because in the end we want stronger, better governance for residents and constituents across the country, and obviously we have to ensure that the transition is done in a way that minimises disruption and has local support. We will reflect carefully on how to get that balance right.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ [HL Deb 13 Apr 2026](#) c54

²⁹⁷ [HL Deb 27 Apr 2026](#) c1037

²⁹⁸ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c425-6

²⁹⁹ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c427

³⁰⁰ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c427

Sian Berry's amendment was rejected by nine votes to three.³⁰¹

The House of Commons subsequently agreed a government amendment at report stage that would permit local authorities that established committee systems following a referendum to retain them in place.

Section 9K of the Local Government Act 2000 was amended by schedule 29 of the bill. Section 9K now distinguishes between 'protected' and 'non-protected' committee systems. A committee system is 'protected' for ten years if it was introduced following a referendum, and for five years if it was introduced via a resolution of the authority. These time periods run respectively from the date of the referendum and the resolution.

Within a year of the protected period ending, a committee system authority must conduct a review. The review can recommend that the authority moves to a leader and cabinet system, but it is not required to recommend this. If the authority decides to retain the committee system, it must pass a resolution to do so. This means that existing committee systems could in principle be 'protected' indefinitely, in the same way as existing directly-elected mayors in local authorities.

At report stage, the House of Lords voted to leave out the clause and schedule that would require local authorities to adopt a leader and cabinet structure, by 247 votes to 187.³⁰² The House of Commons reinstated the provisions at consideration of amendments.³⁰³

In the debate, Baroness Taylor stated that the Isle of Wight Council, as well as Bristol and Sheffield city councils, would be able to retain the committee system under the provisions of the bill.

The amendment will not have any effect on any new authorities created as a result of the government's programme of local government restructuring. New authorities will be required to adopt the leader and cabinet system.

4.5 Supplementary Vote

Clause 59 of the bill would provide for the supplementary vote system to be used for elections for mayors and PCCs. This would reverse a change made in the Elections Act 2022. Prior to that, all mayoral and PCC elections used the supplementary vote. The clause was accepted by the committee by 9 votes to 2.

Sian Berry introduced amendments seeking to ensure that the supplementary vote system is used for the mayoral elections that are currently scheduled for

³⁰¹ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c424

³⁰² [HL Deb 13 Apr 2026](#) c51-53

³⁰³ [HC Deb 21 Apr 2026](#) c282-284; [HL Deb 28 Apr 2026](#) c1142

May 2026. Miatta Fahnbulleh rejected these amendments, saying that the required timescale was unrealistic:

...we do not expect the Bill to come into force in time to restore the supplementary vote system for the elections in May 2026, as much as I would love us to. Once the Bill is enacted, we will need to bring forward secondary legislation to implement the measures updating the conduct rules for these polls. Also, returning officers will need to prepare for polls under the new voting system and we need to ensure that there is sufficient time. Therefore, with all the will in the world, with the full gusto of the Government on what we are trying to do, we do not think we will be able to hit that timetable.³⁰⁴

It is standard practice for changes to electoral practices to have a lead-in period of at least six months, to enable secondary legislation and guidance to be published and local systems to be altered. If this bill becomes law, it is not likely to do so before early spring 2026.

4.6 Councillors' addresses

David Simmonds introduced a new clause that would have permitted councillors to choose not to disclose their home addresses.

there needs to be a degree of confidentiality so that members who are concerned that they will be victimised are able not to have that data, that information, placed in the public domain. Once they have satisfied the local authority's returning officer that they meet the requirements—with evidence, as is currently the case—their home address does not need to be placed in the public domain, creating risk.³⁰⁵

In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh opposed the amendment, saying:

We wholeheartedly agree with [the clause's] intent. In the English devolution White Paper, the Government committed to removing altogether the requirements for local government members' home addresses to be published. The new clause would not achieve that aim because it relies on a member requesting non-publication. We believe that the default position should be non-publication, and we intend to legislate with more robust provisions when parliamentary time allows.³⁰⁶

The committee rejected the amendment by 10 votes to six.³⁰⁷

The government then tabled a new clause 45 at report stage, which would amend the Localism Act 2011. This new clause would remove the requirement for local authority councillors' home addresses to be published as part of the authority's list of councillors' pecuniary interests. It includes provision for

³⁰⁴ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c445

³⁰⁵ PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025 c551

³⁰⁶ PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025 c551

³⁰⁷ PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025 c552

councillors to have their addresses published if the councillor asks the council's monitoring officer to do so.

4.7 General power of competence

A Government amendment was introduced at report stage to extend the general power of competence to national park authorities and the Broads Authority.

4.8 Combined authority minor amendments

Further amendments bring mayoral combined authorities into the provisions of sections 67-73 of the [Local Government and Housing Act 1989](#). These govern whether certain companies and subsidiaries can be said to be under the control of a local authority, and provides reserve intervention powers for the Secretary of State regarding interactions with such companies. Combined authorities will also be able to receive emergency financial assistance, via section 155 of the 1989 Act.

Amendments to schedule 25 state that the government can assign functions, and make other provision for, strategic authorities that are in the “preparatory phase”. This is defined as being between the establishment of the authority and the first mayor taking office.

This amendment may arise indirectly from decisions to postpone the first mayoral elections for combined authorities in Sussex, Hampshire, Essex, and Norfolk and Suffolk to 2028. The Sussex and Brighton combined authority was established on 25 March 2026,³⁰⁸ and further authorities may be established during 2026 in the other areas.

4.9 Grants to joint committees for London councils

Baroness Taylor introduced a new clause 63 that would permit the government to pay grants directly to ‘joint committees of London councils’. In practice this provision will be used to pay grant directly to [London Councils](#), the London boroughs’ membership association. Baroness Taylor said:

This will address a long-standing anomaly in London’s governance. ... the committees established by London Councils are best placed to receive and direct related funding on behalf of boroughs. Among many other examples, this is evident in the Freedom Pass, which the London Councils transport and environment committee negotiates with Transport for London and pays for on

³⁰⁸ See the [Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority Regulations 2026](#)

behalf of boroughs. At the moment, when central government wishes to pay funding for initiatives co-ordinated by London Councils, it must use cumbersome workarounds, such as paying to a nominated lead borough or routing it through the GLA.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ [HL Deb 26 Mar 2026](#) c1644

5

Community Right to Buy

The bill would introduce a right for local community groups and parish and town councils to buy local community assets under certain circumstances. Local authorities are already required to keep a list of ‘assets of community value’. When owners of these assets decide to sell them, community groups are permitted a moratorium of six months on the sale, to allow them time to prepare a bid. This system is thus known at present as the ‘community right to bid’. However, the owner is not obliged to sell to the community group. This system also cannot compel an owner to decide to sell an asset.

The bill would permit local community groups, and parish and town councils, to have a right of first refusal when the owner of an asset decides to sell it. This new system would be similar – though not identical – to the Scottish community right to buy system.

5.1

Environmental benefits

At the time of writing, a building or piece of land must further the ‘social interests’ of the local community in order to be listed as an asset of community value. The bill would extend this qualification to ‘economic or social interests’. This potentially widens the range of properties that could become assets of community value.

Manuela Perteghella introduced amendments that would have permitted listing of assets which had environmental benefits to the community, as well as economic and social benefits. This aim was supported by [written evidence from the Wildlife Trusts](#). In response, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

I share the hon. Member’s concerns for environmental assets, but the scheme was not designed to protect peat bogs or natural flood defences, for example; other mechanisms and provisions in our planning and environmental protection systems do the job. It feels disproportionate to try to wedge that into what is an intervention to empower communities to take on assets, because many of the community and environmental assets that they would want to take on are already permissible in the existing community right to buy.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c450

The author and campaigner, Guy Shrubsole, published a blog on this issue in March 2025.³¹¹

The amendment was not accepted.

Amendments: sporting assets of community value

Government amendments to schedule 27 were accepted. These provide that, where a community group is seeking to purchase a sporting asset of community value that can accommodate more than 10,000 spectators, the local authority must conduct a review 16 weeks after the owner of the asset gives notice that they wish to sell. The review must decide whether the community group has made sufficient progress to indicate that they are capable of buying and managing the asset. For the Government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

While I remain committed to empowering communities to take ownership of larger sports grounds, I also recognise the importance of ensuring that they have the capability and readiness to manage them effectively. That means putting in place processes to safeguard the long-term sustainability of those assets, ensuring that community buyers are well-prepared to take on the responsibilities of permanent ownership.³¹²

Some very large football grounds (for instance, Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United FC) have been listed in the past as assets of community value. This amendment could have the effect of preventing a community group from delaying asset sales in scenarios where they have no realistic prospect of buying the asset.

The provisions in the bill concerning sporting assets of community value apply to locations with spectator facilities. New section 86C1 of the Localism Act 2011, introduced in schedule 27 of the bill, states that land is a sporting asset of community value if it meets the definition of ‘sports grounds’ in section 17 (1) of the [Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975](#):

‘sports ground’ means any place where sports or other competitive activities take place in the open air and where accommodation has been provided for spectators, consisting of artificial structures or of natural structures artificially modified for the purpose.

The barrister Christopher Cant states that this is likely to mean that the definition:

...does not cover a building in which sports or other competitive activities take place inside. It would not seem to cover unused sports facilities such as closed football stadiums. It will not cover sporting facilities which do not accommodate spectators. A field which has not been modified to provide

³¹¹ Guy Shrubsole, [Why communities need the power to own environmental assets](#), Power to Change, 11 Mar 2025

³¹² PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c456

accommodation for spectators will not be a sporting asset of community value but can still qualify as an asset of community value.³¹³

Length of listing and continuation of lists

Baroness Taylor introduced two amendments to the new provisions for a community right to buy found in part 5 of the bill.

One amendment provides that land and property on a local authority's list of assets of community value will remain on the list for ten years, instead of five.³¹⁴

The other amendment concerned local authorities' existing lists of assets of community value. Properties on these lists are subject to the community right to bid introduced by the Localism Act 2011. This amendment makes explicit that existing lists of assets are to be treated as assets of community value for the purposes of the new right to buy that the bill introduces. This would be intended to prevent, for instance, a property owner seeking to argue that the existing lists had been compiled for a different purpose and that the right to buy did not apply.³¹⁵

Removing time limits

Manuela Perteghella introduced an amendment that would have removed the five-year limit for assets of community value to remain listed. If an asset is still on a list of assets five years after it has been added, it can then be re-nominated. The local authority must then decide again whether the criteria for the asset to be added to the list are still met.

In rejecting the amendment, for the Government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

We also recognise that the need and desire of the community may change over time. Something that is an asset of community value in year one might not be an asset of community value in year six or seven. ... I am also mindful of the risk that if we designate assets of community value permanently, local authorities may be incentivised to take tougher judgments on requests from communities to list assets of community value.³¹⁶

Derelict and neglected properties

Three further amendments were introduced by Manuela Perteghella. One proposed a right to apply to purchase "derelict, mismanaged or inaccessible sporting assets of community value". There is a similar legislative provision in Scotland, permitting community bodies to compulsorily purchase "abandoned, neglected or detrimental" land under certain circumstances.

³¹³ Christopher Cant, [Changes to the Asset of Community Value regime](#), Local Government Lawyer, 29 Aug 2025

³¹⁴ This change was made to new section 86 (4) of the Localism Act 2011, which is inserted by schedule 30 paragraph 1 of the bill. See [HL Deb 13 Apr 2026](#) c130

³¹⁵ [HL Deb 13 Apr 2026](#) c130-31

³¹⁶ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c448

This came into force in June 2018. [Further information and guidance on these provisions is available](#) on the Scottish Government's website.

A further amendment from Ms Perteghella proposed to permit local authorities to refuse requests for planning changes, or exercise compulsory purchase powers, if an asset of community value was being “mismanaged” or “deliberately neglected”. A new clause sought to include assets of “negative community value”, defined as land or buildings that:

(a) has been the subject of a measurable and sustained increase in anti-social behaviour in the locality,

(b) has caused material disruption or harm to the amenity, cohesion, or wellbeing of the local community, or

(c) has been vacant or derelict for a continuous period of not less than three years, and during that period no meaningful attempt has been made by the owner of the asset to restore it to use.³¹⁷

The committee rejected this new clause by 10 votes to three.³¹⁸

Manuela Perteghella introduced an amendment that would have placed a statutory requirement on the Secretary of State to ensure local authorities receive funds to enable them to pay for an independent valuation within the right to buy process. Miatta Fahnbulleh rejected the amendment on behalf of the government, but she said that:

I can confirm that we are assessing the costs of independent valuation to local authorities. Where the owner and community buyer cannot agree a purchase price for an asset through negotiation, the local authority must appoint an independent valuer. We will provide new burdens funding to meet those costs accordingly, once assessments have been finalised and tested with local government. I hope that that provides some assurance.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ As above, c463-4

³¹⁸ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c544-5

³¹⁹ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c455

6

Local audit

A number of technical government amendments were accepted to part 4 of the bill, which would establish a new Local Audit Office (LAO). In particular, government new clause 9 would permit the LAO to undertake reviews into individual local authorities' audit and reporting arrangements at the request of the Secretary of State.³²⁰

Between 1983 and 2012 the Audit Commission conducted a proportion of audits of local authorities 'in house', contracting out the remainder to private firms. The bill will give the LAO the option to undertake public provision of local audit. The Minister, Miatta Fahnbulleh, said:

Let me first clarify that no decision has yet been made on who will deliver public provision. It is important to state that. The Bill is drafted deliberately to allow flexibility, whether through the Local Audit Office itself, through a company that it establishes or in collaboration with the private sector.³²¹

Local authority audit committees

The bill would introduce a legal requirement for local authorities to establish audit committees. At present this is not a legal requirement, though frequently local authorities have established audit committees.

Manuela Perteghella introduced amendments to clause 66. This clause mandates local authorities to establish audit committees. The amendments would have moved the responsibility for specifying local audit committee membership and conduct requirements from the Secretary of State to the LAO. A further amendment would also have permitted regulations to be made about the training of audit committee members. Manuela Perteghella said:

Mandatory training would ensure that new members start with a shared understanding and pick up those very important skills. Without training, there could be missed red flags, opaque decisions and audit delays that cost taxpayers millions. We are calling for the mandatory training of audit committee members so that they know how to scrutinise budgets, assess risks—that is the most important thing—and challenge constructively.³²²

In rejecting the amendment, for the Government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said that the government intended to introduce statutory guidance for local authority

³²⁰ This is clause 67 of the Bill at the end of House of Commons committee stage. It inserts a new section 33B into the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

³²¹ PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025 c475

³²² PBC Deb 28 Oct 2025 c487

audit committees, which would include a requirement for members to undertake appropriate training.³²³

³²³ As above, c488

7

Ban on upward-only rent reviews

Clause 102 of the bill would ban upward-only rent reviews in tenancy agreements for commercial property in England and Wales.³²⁴ Currently such terms say that, where rent is reviewed based on some external metric such as inflation or market prices (which could go up or down), the rent can go up in line with said metric, or stay the same, but not go down (referred to throughout this briefing as “upward-only terms”).

For example, a tenancy agreement might say the rent will increase annually in line with inflation but, should inflation turn negative, the rent would stay the same.

Clause 102 would insert a new section 54A into the [Landlord and Tenant Act 1954](#) (LTA 1954) nullifying the effect of upward-only terms:

- In rent reviews that happen during commercial tenancies.
- In commercial tenancy renewal arrangements.

Terms that say the rent will increase by a known quantity at each review (say, increase by 2%) would continue to be allowed.

The scope and terms are defined in Schedule 36 of the bill (which in turn would insert Schedules 7A and 7B into the LTA 1954 to deal with rent reviews and tenancy renewals respectively)

7.1

Commons’ stages

The government tabled amendments at Commons committee stage that largely rewrote schedule 36 (then schedule 31) while maintaining its general effect. Substantive amendments extended the scope of the ban and closed loopholes in the original legislation and are described below. All government amendments were agreed without division.

³²⁴ [HL Bill 185 \[as amended on Report\]](#)

Non-business tenancies

As originally drafted, the bill would have banned upward-only terms in tenancies covered by part 2 of the LTA 1954, namely tenancies where the premises is occupied by the tenant for business purposes.³²⁵

However, this would have meant the ban didn't apply in certain situations where the tenant does not occupy the premises for business purposes such as:

- Tenancies between a landlord and a tenant who is sub-letting the property rather than occupying it themselves.
- Tenancies where the tenant intends to occupy the property themselves but has not yet done so or has recently vacated the premises.³²⁶

The government's amendments provide that upward-only terms would be banned for tenancies covered by part 2 of the LTA 1954, or which have the potential to be covered by part 2 of the LTA 1954 (that is, where the tenancy allows the tenant to occupy the premises for business purposes).

The amendments would also ban superior tenancies (those between the landlord and a tenant who sub-lets the premises under a sub-tenancy) from requiring the said sub-tenancy to include upward-only terms. This ban would be retroactive.

Law firm CMS highlighted that the change could lead to tenants in pre-ban superior tenancies still being subject to upward-only terms but unable to include upward-only terms in any sub-tenancy.³²⁷

Tenancies where the tenant can require the landlord to grant a new tenancy

As originally drafted, the bill would have banned upward-only terms:

- In rent reviews that happen during tenancies.
- In tenancy renewal arrangements under which the tenant can be required by the landlord or another person to take a new tenancy (also called put options).

Government amendments during committee stage expanded this second scenario to include tenancy renewal arrangements under which the tenant can require the landlord to grant a new tenancy (also called call options) and not just put options.

³²⁵ [Landlord and Tenant Act 1954](#) section 23

³²⁶ [PBC Deb 28 October 2025 c500](#)

³²⁷ CMA Law-Now, "[Upwards only rent review ban – update to Bill and tenant impacts](#)", 6 November 2025

Tenancies varied to include upward-only terms

As originally drafted, the bill would have banned upward-only terms where “the amount of the rent under review that will be payable [...] is not known [...] at the time when the tenancy is granted”.

This meant that under the original drafting, the bill would not have had any impact on, say, a tenancy agreement which originally specified the rent would increase on review by a known quantity (say, increase by 2%), but then was varied to include upward-only terms.

This is because at the time the tenancy was granted, the amount of rent that would be payable on review would have been known, even if such terms were no longer in the tenancy agreement.

For the government, communities minister Miatta Fahnbulleh said the amendments would mean the ban “applies if the lease was granted in a compliant manner but was later varied to include non-compliant terms”.³²⁸

Debate and opposition amendment on consultation

During committee stage Mike Reader (Lab) warned about the proposal’s impact on the commercial property market beyond the market for high street premises, suggesting the measure might better be limited to certain commercial use classes or to properties below a certain rental value. He said:

There are further things we can do if we want to fulfil the aim in the White Paper, which is to protect high streets, while ensuring that we do not impact the future development of health, data centres, logistics, commercial offices and all the other things we need to deliver growth in our country.³²⁹

David Simmonds (Con) criticised the proposals, saying:

Our concern is that we risk creating a number of complex structures for rental agreements that in practice have the same consequence, but without the benefit of upward-only rent reviews, which is that landlords’ certainty about their position in turn encourages investment in our high streets, the availability of the units we want to see, and those units not being turned into residences or repurposed for things other than business.³³⁰

Mr Simmonds moved amendment 303 which would have required the government to first consult about the impact of the proposal on businesses before bringing the ban into effect. The amendment was defeated by 9 votes to 2.³³¹

³²⁸ [PBC Deb 28 October 2025 cc500-501](#)

³²⁹ [PBC Deb 28 October 2025 c506](#)

³³⁰ [As above](#)

³³¹ [PBC 28 October 2025 division 82](#)

7.2

Lords stages

During report stage, the Lords passed minor government amendments without division (319-324 as numbered during Lords' report stage). The government said the amendments closed loopholes by which the ban could be circumvented.³³²

During committee stage various opposition amendments were debated but none were moved.

Lord Jamieson (Con) spoke against the ban saying it posed a risk to the “stability, liquidity and long-term health of the commercial property market” and had been put forward without consultation.³³³

Lord Jamieson spoke to an amendment which would require the government to review the market impacts of the ban within 12 months of coming into force.

³³² [HL Deb 13 April 2026 cc189-190](#)

³³³ [HL Deb 5 March 2026 c575GC](#)

8 Matters outside the Bill raised in debate

This section collates a small number of substantive debates from the bill's committee stage concerning matters that are not covered by the bill. Debates on these matters took place following amendments tabled by opposition parties. This section sets out the cases made regarding each of these matters and any new information contained in substantive statements from the Minister.

8.1 Visitor levies

Some media coverage and other publications during 2025 have proposed that English mayoralties should have the power to levy visitor levies or 'tourist taxes'.³³⁴ The Scottish Parliament and the Senedd have passed legislation to permit local authorities in Scotland and Wales to introduce tourist levies. This power does not exist in England, and the UK government has stated during 2025 that it has no plans to introduce one.³³⁵ More detail on this issue can be found in the Library research briefing [Tourist taxes: policy and debates](#).

Manuela Perteghella introduced a new clause that would have required the Secretary of State to conduct a review into giving local authorities powers to introduce a visitor levy. For the government, Miatta Fahnbulleh rejected the new clause, saying:

I recognise the type of levy that new clause 41 would introduce, and I recognise that it is supported by local authorities and mayors. The Government keep all tax policy under review, and any changes to tax policy will be announced at a fiscal event in the normal way. I do not believe that the Chancellor would be very pleased with me if I were to make tax policy now in this great Committee.³³⁶

Visitor levies were also mentioned briefly at the second reading of the bill.³³⁷

The Times published an article on 16 November 2025 suggesting that powers for combined authority mayors to introduce a visitor levy would be introduced via amendments to this bill:

³³⁴ For instance, see Thomas Pope and Jill Rutter, [Rachel Reeves should allow local tourist taxes](#), Institute for Government, 29 Jul 2025; Anthony Breach, [How should a tourist tax work for England's mayors?](#), Centre for Cities, 23 Oct 2025

³³⁵ For instance, see [HL Deb 14 Jul 2025](#) c1583-4; [PQ HC 64764 2024-26](#), 10 Jul 2025

³³⁶ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025, c342

³³⁷ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c183; c241

British holidaymakers face paying a nightly levy on hotel stays and Airbnb-style rentals under plans expected to be announced by Rachel Reeves in the budget.

The chancellor is set to give mayors sweeping powers to raise taxes by charging tourists on the cost of an overnight stay.

The move is expected to raise hundreds of millions of pounds for mayors such as Sir Sadiq Khan and Andy Burnham to invest in transport and public services in their cities.

Government sources said England was an outlier in developed countries for not having a tourism tax, which is also being introduced by devolved governments in Scotland and Wales.

...

Reeves had previously been resistant to the idea, telling mayors in meetings last year that people were already paying enough tax and that she was worried about the impact on the hospitality sector.

But she is thought to have been persuaded by evidence from cities across Europe suggesting that tourist demand is not dampened by the levy.³³⁸

8.2

Councillor conduct and standards

The Starmer government consulted in December 2024 on introducing a new framework for local authority councillor standards and conduct. The consultation concluded in February 2025, and no government response has been published at the time of writing.³³⁹ Further detail on this consultation, and the standards regime in place at the time of writing, can be found in the Library research briefing [Local government standards in England](#).

Standards and conduct are not covered in this bill. When asked about this point in the Second Reading debate, Angela Rayner, then secretary of state for Housing, Communities, and Local Government said:

We intend to bring forward legislation. Our response to the local government standards consultation sets out our plans for whole-system reform, including empowering local authorities to suspend councillors who are guilty of serious misconduct for up to six months, with the option to withhold allowances and institute premises and facilities bans. We are committed to ensuring that misconduct is dealt with swiftly and fairly across the country at local and regional mayoral levels.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Max Kendix, [Cost of hotels and Airbnb rentals to rise under planned tourism tax](#), 16 Nov 2025

³³⁹ MHCLG, [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England](#), 18 Dec 2024

³⁴⁰ [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c186. See also [HC Deb 2 Sep 2025](#), c209

The Municipal Journal then reported in September 2025 that further legislation was anticipated on this issue:

The Government will propose more legislation to enhance the scrutiny and accountability of mayors after the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill gains Royal Assent, The MJ understands.

Calls for local public accounts committees (LPACs), which would mirror the national Public Accounts Committee (PAC), failed to make the devolution Bill though the Government ‘remains committed’ to enhancing accountability and scrutiny of public spending by strategic authorities.

A Bill covering accountability, as well as standards, is now expected in 2026-27.

The Government is understood to be currently enthusiastic about LPACs, with English devolution minister Jim McMahon believed to be a fan.

Although no official cost estimates have been made, the Treasury would need to sign off on the cost, which could be £300,000 a year for each strategic authority.³⁴¹

The government published a response to the December 2024 consultation on 11 November 2025.³⁴² The response stated that the government would legislate “as soon as Parliamentary time allows”. The consultation response proposes a mandatory code of conduct for all local authorities; mandatory standards committees; a power for local authorities to suspend councillors for up to six months; a right of review for both councillors and complainants; a national appeals body, accessible to both councillors and complainants; and a disqualification for any councillor suspended for the maximum length of time more than once in a five-year period.

Sian Berry introduced an amendment at committee stage that would have required each local authority’s monitoring officer to investigate breaches of the code of conduct. In response, for the government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

We have consulted on proposals for comprehensive reform of the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England. Our response to the consultation will be published shortly and will set out in detail the scale of our ambition for a whole-system reform of the standards and conduct framework.

Our ambitions go significantly further than the amendment in terms of introducing a clearer and consistently applied framework for standards and conduct, and ensuring misconduct is dealt with swiftly and fairly in every type and tier of local government. We will bring forward legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows...³⁴³

³⁴¹ Dan Peters and Neil Merrick, [Fresh law to boost mayoral scrutiny](#), Municipal Journal, 3 Sep 2025

³⁴² MHCLG, [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response](#), 11 Nov 2025

³⁴³ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c429

8.3

Statutory notices

Manuela Perteghella introduced an amendment that would have required local authorities to publish notice of any change made to a local authority's governance arrangements in a print newspaper that has “paid-for or free distribution in the relevant local area, and .. [is] published at regular intervals”.³⁴⁴

The purpose of the amendment was to establish that online-only announcement of a change in local authority governance arrangements would not have been sufficient. The amendment would only have applied to notices of a change to the local authority's governance arrangements, but it gave rise to a broader debate on statutory notices.

Statutory notices are legal requirements, located in many different acts of Parliament, to publish information in local newspapers or in other printed forms about specific matters of public interest. In the mid-2010s, there was some debate around legislating to provide that online-only notices would be sufficient, but this was never progressed (see section 4.1 of the Library briefing [Local government transparency in England](#) for further details).

Manuela Perteghella said:

Statutory notices are legal requirements, located in many different Acts, to publish information about specific matters of public interest. Examples include planning applications; details of councillors' allowances; and the creation and closure of footpaths.... The amendments will guarantee that public notices reach the people affected, and reinforce the principle that information should be accessible, inclusive, local, useful and timely. A person who is not online will not know that, for example, the road between their house and their GP will be closed on a day they have to attend an appointment.³⁴⁵

For the government, Miatta Fahnbulleh said:

To be clear: nothing in this provision stops a council from including local print newspapers, which will continue to play an important role. We are simply enabling councillors in the 21st century to think about the range of media that makes sense for the constituents, voters and residents they need to reach.³⁴⁶

The committee rejected the amendment by eight votes to four.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c429

³⁴⁵ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c430-1

³⁴⁶ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c433

³⁴⁷ PBC Deb 23 Oct 2025 c434

8.4

Remote meetings

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering introduced an amendment that would have permitted local authorities in England to hold remote meetings under certain circumstances, including those “affecting— (a) individual councillors, such as illness or disability, or (b) a council as a whole, such as adverse weather or flooding”.

Baroness Taylor indicated that the government planned to introduce legislation on this matter but was not yet ready to do so, and therefore it was opposed to the amendment:

Our approach is therefore to enable, rather than constrain, locally responsive policy-making. That was the position we set out clearly in our consultation response last year, and it remains our position today. This will require legislation that specifically meets the needs of authorities of all types and tiers to ensure this flexibility. The Government are considering this matter separately and in slower time to ensure that, when parliamentary time allows for remote attendance to be legislated for, such provisions are robust, inclusive, and achieve an operationally effective outcome at a local level.³⁴⁸

The amendment was withdrawn.

The government consulted from October to December 2024 on introducing a power for local authorities in England to hold meetings remotely, and to introduce proxy voting systems for councillors. A response to this consultation was published on 5 June 2025.³⁴⁹ This response stated that the government would “legislate to support permanent provision in relation to both policies, when parliamentary time allows”.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ [HL Deb 13 Apr 2026](#) c83

³⁴⁹ MHCLG, [Remote attendance and proxy voting in local authorities: consultation results and government response](#), 5 Jun 2025. See also [HCWS 684 2024-25](#), 5 Jun 2025

³⁵⁰ As above

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