

# Addressing Key Issues: Local Authorities and Housing Challenges

Malcolm Gardner

13 May 2024, 11:02 AM

## Introduction and Greetings

Good morning, everyone. I hope you're all well and have recovered from the recent excitement of the elections and the stunning display of the Northern Lights. It's been a whirlwind of events lately. Let's dive into today's session, which will be a bit lighter. We have a few attendees: Naomi, Robert, Alex, Paul, and Gareth. Laura is on holiday in Wales, and Kirsty might join us later. Kevin is currently unreachable, and Sean and Bob are off today.

## Local Elections Impact

Let's start with the local elections. Although there's no need to revisit the results in detail, I'm curious about the potential strategic changes in local authorities. Robert, did your area experience any significant shifts?

**Robert Fox:** Not this time. We had a major change last year when Labour took over, bringing services back in-house, like the Reds and Bens contract. This year, it's more stable.

**Malcolm Gardner:** And Naomi, what about your area?

**Naomi Armstrong:** No major shifts here, just one minor change.

**Malcolm Gardner:** The same goes for us in Leeds—minimal changes. However, we might see internal adjustments in authorities where significant changes occurred.

**Paul Howarth:** Indeed, councils are financially constrained, limiting radical changes. However, issues like addressing domestic violence might see more focus.



128 CITY ROAD, LONDON, EC1V 2NX

© 2024 VISIONARY ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Phone: 07845 6800171 [malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk](mailto:malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk)

WhatsApp: Malcolm Gardner LinkedIn: <https://bit.ly/3aO EZGN>

Registered company: 14356542

DOC REF: 240513SUMMARY.DOCX

DATE: 23/01/2024 PAGE: - 1 -

**Malcolm Gardner:** Alex, your organization has been vocal recently. Any thoughts on changes in local authorities?

**Alex Clegg:** Mayoral contests might bring bigger policy shifts due to less budget constraint, but generally, council wiggle room remains small.

## Homelessness Issues

Turning to homelessness, recent figures show a significant increase in homelessness assessments and temporary accommodations. Naomi, how are these numbers impacting your service?

**Naomi Armstrong:** The costs are straining our General Fund. Finding accommodation within the city is challenging, leading us to place people outside, which complicates matters for families and working individuals.

**Malcolm Gardner:** Robert, is homelessness a significant issue in your area?

**Robert Fox:** Not significantly in my immediate knowledge, but rent levels and support costs are ongoing issues.

**Malcolm Gardner:** Alex, your thoughts on this crisis?

**Alex Clegg:** The intersection of housing and welfare cuts is creating pressure points. Councils feel the responsibility, but resources are thin.

**Paul Howarth:** Prevention is key. Local authorities should analyze residents' circumstances to prevent homelessness. The relationship between local housing authorities and housing benefit management was better in the past.

**Naomi Armstrong:** I agree. The shift of housing elements to Universal Credit has complicated matters, making it difficult to support vulnerable people effectively.

**Gareth Morgan:** Local housing allowances are often insufficient, and private rental properties are reducing, partly due to the rise of Airbnb in tourist areas.



128 CITY ROAD, LONDON, EC1V 2NX

© 2024 VISIONARY ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Phone: 07845 6800171 [malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk](mailto:malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk)

WhatsApp: Malcolm Gardner LinkedIn: <https://bit.ly/3aOEZGN>

Registered company: 14356542

DOC REF: 240513SUMMARY.DOCX

DATE: 23/01/2024 PAGE: - 2 -

## Challenges in Social Housing

Government reports highlight several challenges in social housing, including decreased construction, resource allocation to urgent needs, and funding restrictions due to right-to-buy policies. Are we building enough social housing?

**Robert Fox:** There is resistance to new builds, particularly in rural areas. Local authorities often prioritize commercial investments over social housing due to funding constraints.

**Malcolm Gardner:** Alex, does this resonate with your observations?

**Alex Clegg:** Building more houses, even expensive ones, should help overall affordability. However, direct investment in social housing is crucial for addressing acute needs.

**Paul Howarth:** Improving social housing standards was a significant achievement during the Blair-Brown years. Current challenges require similar focus and investment.

## Refugee Homelessness

Refugee homelessness has risen sharply. After gaining asylum, many lose Home Office accommodation, leading to increased homelessness. Naomi, how is this affecting Cambridge?

**Naomi Armstrong:** We work with local partners to accommodate refugees, but it remains a challenging issue.

**Paul Howarth:** The more efficient the government is at processing asylum applications, the worse the homelessness issue becomes, shifting the burden to local authorities.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while the challenges are daunting, addressing housing and homelessness requires a multi-faceted approach. Building more homes, investing in social housing, and effective policy implementation are crucial. Thank you, everyone, for your insights. Let's continue to work towards solutions despite the difficulties. Have a great week, and see you all next time.



128 CITY ROAD, LONDON, EC1V 2NX

© 2024 VISIONARY ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Phone: 07845 6800171 [malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk](mailto:malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk)

WhatsApp: Malcolm Gardner LinkedIn: <https://bit.ly/3aOEZGN>

Registered company: 14356542

DOC REF: 240513SUMMARY.DOCX

DATE: 23/01/2024 PAGE: - 3 -