













has recently published information about projects that will receive an allocation between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, as well as prioritised projects that are ready for delivery.

The two-year commitment will help protect 52,000 homes and non-residential properties, including shops, business and industrial premises, schools, hospitals, transport links, and utility sites.

Read more about the programme: <https://tinyurl.com/mrx5frtr>



## **SLCC: Arts Council England Review: Open Call for Evidence**

Baroness Hodge of Barking has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to conduct an independent review of the Arts Council England (ACE).

Supported by an advisory panel featuring experts from across the creative sectors, the review is ‘an opportunity to examine how to bring cultural excellence to every corner of the country while amplifying local voices in decision-making.’

The review will look at how ACE nurtures creativity at all levels, and explore ways to enhance this through stronger dynamic partnerships between national and regional stakeholders.

Baroness Hodge will provide the government with a comprehensive report of her findings, alongside recommendations for change later this year. The government will publish the conclusions of the review along with the government’s response in 2026.

Find out more, including how to respond: <https://tinyurl.com/5y7y9f5m>

The closing date of the survey is midday 30 June 2025.



## **SLCC: Government Announces Planning Reforms to Infrastructure Delivery**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has announced that, under changes to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, clean energy projects, public transport links, and other major infrastructure projects are set to be delivered on average at least a year faster.

Under the changes, statutory consultation requirements unique to major infrastructure projects will be scrapped, ‘cutting down the average two-year statutory pre-consultation period by half and paving the way for new roads, railways, and windfarms that will bolster the country’s connectivity and energy security.’

MHCLG has noted that recognising community voices will remain vital. As such, the government ‘will bring this process in line with planning applications for major housing schemes, and set out new statutory





## Unity Trust Bank: New website and guidance for local councils on mandate change (Account Change Management)

Unity Trust Bank have launched a refreshed new website for our Local Council customers, which we hope will be easy to navigate and to find useful documents. This can be found at:  
<https://www.unity.co.uk/sectors/local-councils/>

We've also produced a brand-new guidance document for Local Councils, to guide them through the process of changing their mandate (Account Change Management). We often receive feedback at conferences and events, and this is one process which we felt we could assist a little further with. The latest guide is available via button on the above link on our webpage.

An email has gone out to existing customers with this information from our Marketing team, but there may be some who haven't updated their email addresses; or brand-new customers who have missed this.

Any problems, queries or concerns (non-transactional), please don't hesitate to contact our dedicated local council specialists in our Public & Third Sectors team – [localcouncils@unity.co.uk](mailto:localcouncils@unity.co.uk)

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## SLCC announce updated webinar programme to support with devolution

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper – Power and Partnership: Foundations for Growth, there will be many new challenges for local council clerks, and to support with this, we have implemented a programme of webinars to provide guidance for some of the key issues.

In addition to our two previous panel discussions, **'What Does It Mean for Us? Reorganisation to Unitary Local Government'** and **'What Does It Mean for Us? Mayoral Combined Authorities'**, upcoming webinars in this series now available for booking include:

- People Management
- Transfer of Assets
- Project Management
- Time management

And dates coming soon:

- Programme management
- Business planning
- Negotiation skills

Visit SLCC webinar page to see the latest listings and book your place (SLCC login required to book):  
<https://tinyurl.com/536tnney>





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## The Practitioner's Guide 2025-26

The Practitioners' Guide 2025-2026, issued by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP), formerly the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG), is a critical resource for smaller authorities in England, including parish and town councils, to prepare statutory annual accounting and governance statements as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

While the Guide itself does not have direct legal authority to enforce compliance, its influence stems from its role as the definitive source of "Proper Practices," which are legally binding under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Every local council should use it to check its compliance with Proper Practices when considering its responses in its Annual Governance Statement in the AGAR.

Below is an explanation of how it facilitates compliance:

### 1. Definition of Proper Practices

- The Guide outlines "Proper Practices" in Sections 1 and 2, detailing governance and accounting requirements for smaller authorities. These cover financial management, internal controls, risk management, budgeting, and reporting.
- Proper Practices are mandatory for the financial year ending 31 March 2026, and the AGAR for that year must adhere to these standards. Comparative figures for the prior year (ending 31 March 2025) must also align with these practices.
- By clearly defining these standards, the Guide provides a framework that councils must follow to meet statutory obligations. (<https://www.slcc.co.uk/sappp-formerly-jpag-practitioners-guide-2025-available-now/> )

### 2. Statutory Framework and Legal Obligation

- Parish and town councils are legally required to prepare their accounts and governance statements in accordance with Proper Practices as set out in the Guide, under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, which mandates compliance with the AGAR process.
- Failure to comply can result in penalties, enforcement actions, or qualified audit opinions from external auditors, which can damage a council's reputation and trigger further scrutiny.
- The Guide's authority is reinforced by its endorsement by bodies like the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), the Association of Drainage

Authorities (ADA), and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, making it the standard reference for auditors and councils. (<https://www.slcc.co.uk/jpag-rebranding/>)

### 3. Role in Audit and Accountability

- The Guide serves as the benchmark for internal and external audits. Internal auditors use it to evaluate a council's risk management, control, and governance processes, while external auditors assess compliance with AGAR requirements. Ensure your internal auditor is using it.
- Amendments in the 2025-2026 Guide, such as requirements for generic email accounts hosted on authority-owned domains (e.g., clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk) and clarifications on internal audit independence (Paragraph 1.35) and publication of financial reports (Paragraphs 4.23, 5.80, 5.83, 5.85), set specific expectations that auditors will check.
- Non-compliance identified during audits can lead to recommendations for corrective action or public reporting of deficiencies, compelling councils to align with the standards set out in Proper Practices in the Guide.

### 4. Practical Guidance and Clarity

- The Guide provides detailed, practical instructions to ensure councils understand their responsibilities. For instance, it clarifies segregation of duties (Paragraph 5.11) and handling of trust finances (Paragraph 1.37), reducing ambiguity in compliance.
- An addendum to Paragraph 1.524 addresses uncertainties about data protection officer requirements, ensuring councils have clear guidance to avoid breaches of the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- By offering templates, best practices, and examples, the Guide makes it easier for clerks, Responsible Financial Officers (RFOs), and councillors to implement Proper Practices effectively.

### 5. Support Through Training and Resources

- The Guide is complemented by resources from NALC, SLCC, LALC and other organizations, such as training courses, budgeting toolkits, and advisory services, which reinforce its standards.
- These resources empower councils to build capacity and ensure compliance, particularly for smaller authorities with limited staff or expertise. While providing assurance to taxpayers and local residents.

### 6. Encouragement of Transparency and Public Accountability

- The Guide emphasizes transparency, requiring councils to publish AGAR documents, including governance statements and external auditor reports, on their websites by 30 September. This public scrutiny incentivizes compliance to avoid criticism or legal challenges from residents.

Find us on   
@LincsALC & [www.lalc.co.uk](http://www.lalc.co.uk)

*Do you have news to share?  
[Get in touch](#) via our website.*

*LALC will provide links but is not responsible for the content of external websites.*

- For instance, Paragraph 5.80 advises publishing financial reports on an easily accessible part of the council’s website, enhancing public access and accountability. (<https://www.slcc.co.uk/sappp-formerly-jpag-practitioners-guide-2025-available-now/> )

## 7. Influence Through Sector-Wide Adoption

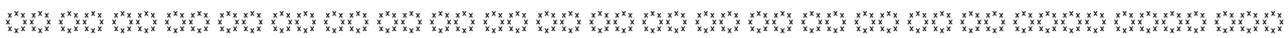
- The Guide is widely recognized across the local government sector, with NALC, SLCC, and ADA urging councils to adopt its standards. For example, NALC’s advocacy for financial sustainability and its response to government inquiries reference the Guide’s Proper Practices.
- Its adoption by over 10,000 parish and town councils, representing approximately 100,000 councillors, creates a sector-wide expectation of compliance. (<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/jpag> )

## Limitations and Considerations

- While the Guide sets out Proper Practices, enforcement relies on audits and local accountability mechanisms, such as complaints to the monitoring officer, ICO or the external auditor.
- Compliance can be challenging for smaller councils with limited resources, but the Guide’s clarity and supporting resources aim to mitigate this.

## Conclusion

- The Practitioners’ Guide 2025-2026, issued by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP), holds significant influence over parish and town councils by defining mandatory Proper Practices, serving as the basis for statutory audits, and providing clear, practical guidance. Its authority is rooted in the legal framework of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, reinforced by audit processes, sector-wide adoption, and public accountability requirements.

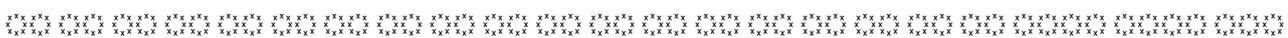


## University of Lincoln - Annual public lecture on Ageing Alone

You are invited to attend the Healthy Ageing Research Group HARG in partnership with Lincs YMCA & Age Friendly Communities East Lindsey District Council on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 12 noon – 3pm in the Minerva Building, Rm MB1014, University of Lincoln.

Guest speakers include Dr Robin Hadley (talking about how demographic shifts indicate a growing population of childless older adults, who face an increased risk of loneliness and social isolation) & Dr Cat Forward (speaking about her research about the health and wellbeing older women living alone).

For any enquiries or to register, contact: [LMarsh@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:LMarsh@lincoln.ac.uk)



## A selection of photos from VE80 celebrations around our parishes

Thanks to the following parish and town councils for the photos of their VE80 celebrations: Pinchbeck, Heighington, Pointon & Sempringham, Market Rasen, Sutton Bridge, Deeping St James, North Somercotes, Welton.

Activities included tea parties, 1940's music, dancing, the Lantern of Peace, lit beacons, picnics, war memorial services, knitted poppies, and singing of "I Vow to Thee My Country".



