

<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>			
Report Title	Conservative Party Manifesto, Conservative-DUP Agreement, Queen's Speech and Brexit Update		
Contributors	Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration	Item	
Class	Part 1 (Open)	Date	11 July 2017

## **Introduction**

1. This report sets out the policy and legislative programme of the new Conservative administration. The above mentioned programme reflects the commitments set out in the Conservative Party Election manifesto published in May as well as the contents of the Queen's Speech and the Conservative-Democratic Unionist Party Agreement, both of which were released in June 2017. In addition, this report includes an update on Brexit.

## **Background and context**

2. The 2017 UK General Election was called just two months after the Government had triggered Article 50, signalling the UK's intention to leave the European Union. Citing the need for a clear mandate to commence the Brexit negotiations as a rationale, on 18 April 2017, the Prime Minister Theresa May announced she would seek an Election on 8 June.
3. The Prime Minister had previously indicated that she had no plans to call a snap poll. However, a House of Commons motion to allow this was passed on 19 April, with 522 votes for and 13 against (a majority of 509) meeting the required two-thirds majority to permit the early dissolution of Parliament as required by the Fixed Term Parliaments Act of 2011.
4. The Election result, saw the Conservative Party win the largest number of seats in Parliament (318) but short of the 326 required to form a majority Government. In total the Conservatives lost 13 seats compared to 2015. By contrast, Labour won 262 seats (up 30 compared to 2015), the Liberal Democrats 12 seats (up 4 on 2015), whilst the Scottish Nationalists won 35 seats (down 21 on the last General Election). The Green Party held on to the one seat secured in 2015.
5. Crucially in the context of this Election, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) won 10 seats. Following days of negotiation, it was to the DUP that the Conservatives turned to secure the working majority necessary to form a Government.

## **Policy programme**

6. This section of the report covers the manifesto commitments made by the Conservative Party that specifically affect local government or the broader public

sector. Some of these manifesto commitments have made their way into the Government's legislative programme over the term of the new administration.

7. The Conservative Party manifesto set out, what it describes as, the five giant challenges as follows:
  - the need for a strong economy
  - Brexit and a changing world
  - enduring social divisions
  - an ageing society
  - fast-changing technology
8. Set out under the sub-headings below (taken directly from the manifesto text) is a summary of key elements of the broader policy programme of the new Government.

### A strong economy that works for everyone

9. The manifesto sets out that a strong economy is the basis for everything the Conservatives want to achieve for the nation. Key commitments under this theme are as follows:

#### 9.1 The economy

- increase the personal allowance to £12,500 and the higher rate to £50,000
- continue to ensure that local residents can veto high increases in Council Tax via a referendum
- make longer term reforms to the business rates system to address concerns about the way it currently works (to include a full review of the system to make sure that it is up to date for a world in which people increasingly shop online)
- simplify the tax system
- continue to increase the National Living Wage to 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020 and after that, by the rate of median earnings
- take steps to ensure that people working in the 'gig' economy are properly protected
- ask the independent Migration Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Government about how the visa system can become better aligned with the administration's modern industrial strategy

### A strong and united nation in a changing world

10. The manifesto pledges: an orderly and smooth exit from the European Union, to strengthen democracy and recognise the role played by the public sector. Key commitments under this theme are as follows:

#### 10.1 Brexit legislation

- enact a Great Repeal Bill that will convert EU law into UK law, allowing Parliament the ability to pass legislation to amend, repeal or improve any piece of EU law that it chooses
- bring forward additional bills to ensure that when the UK has left the EU, there is a clear statutory basis for UK authorities to exercise powers that are currently exercised through EU law and institutions

## 10.2 Democratic institutions

- legislate to ensure that a form of identification must be presented before voting
- continue with the current boundary review, enshrining the principle of equal seats, while reducing the number of MPs to 600
- make sure that Councils receive help to deal with asylum seekers and refugees as they arrive and establish schemes to help individuals, charities, faith groups, churches and businesses to provide housing and other support for refugees
- take new powers to force Councils to remove roadside litter and prosecute offenders
- place new duties on Councils to consult when they wish to cut down street trees
- establish in law, the freedom for employees to mutualise, where appropriate within the public sector

## The world's great meritocracy

11. The manifesto pledges to make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy, with "more" to be done to support millions of people who live in "ordinary working families". Key commitments under this theme are as follows:

### 11.1 Education and employment

- prohibit Councils from creating any new places in schools that have been rated either 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' by Ofsted
- introduce new funding arrangements so that a specialist maths school can be opened in every major city in England
- lift the ban on the establishment of selective schools, subject to conditions, such as allowing pupils to join at other ages as well as eleven
- strengthen the teaching of literacy in the early years so that all pupils regardless of background get the best possible start in life
- make funding fairer and ensure that no school has its budget cut as a result of the new formula
- increase the overall schools budget by £4 billion by 2022 and continue to protect the Pupil Premium to support those who need it
- offer a free school breakfast to every child in every year of primary school, while children from low-income families will continue to receive free school lunches
- break down the barriers to public sector workers taking on more qualified roles because of their prior educational attainment (eg: teaching assistants)

can become qualified teachers and healthcare assistants can become qualified nurses via a degree apprenticeship route)

- offer a full-year National Insurance Contributions holiday to those employing former wards of the care system, ex-offenders, those with disabilities, people with chronic mental health problems and those who have been unemployed for a year

## 11.2 Communities and social integration

- bring forward a new integration strategy
- work with schools to ensure that those with intakes from one predominant racial, cultural or religious background teach their students about pluralistic British values
- take further steps to reduce immigration from outside the European Union

## 11.3 Tackling crime and criminal justice

- consider what new criminal offences and aggravated offences need to be established to defeat extremists
- takes steps to address pay gaps for gender and race as well as the experiences of those affected by mental health problems of who are disabled
- legislate to enshrine a definition of domestic violence and abuse in law, providing the legal underpinning for everything in the new act
- create a domestic violence and abuse commissioner in law to stand up for victims and survivors
- ensure that victims who have life-time tenancies and flee violence are able to secure a new lifetime tenancy automatically
- enshrine victims entitlements in law, making it clear what level of service they should expect from the police, courts and criminal justice system
- widen the role of police and crime commissioners to help them cut crime for their local communities
- create a national community sentencing framework that punishes offenders and focuses on the measures that have a better chance of turning people around and preventing crime such as curfews and orders to tackle drug and alcohol abuse

## A restored contract between the generations

12. The manifesto sets out a commitment to restore the contract between generations, providing older people with security against ill health, whilst ensuring that the promise of opportunity and prosperity for young people is maintained. Key commitments under this theme are as follows:

### 12.1 Social care and health

- maintain the pensions triple lock until 2020, thereafter introduce a new double lock – meaning that pensions will rise with earnings or inflation
- align the future means-testing for domiciliary care with that for residential care so that people are looked after in the place that is best for them

- introduce a single capital floor, for care costs, set at £100,000 (more than four times the current means test threshold)
- extend freedom to defer payments for residential care to those receiving care at home, so that no-one will have to sell their home in their life-time to pay for care
- introduce a new statutory entitlement to carers leave – in recognition of the fact that the majority of care is informally provided mainly by families
- as part of Brexit negotiations, make it a priority that the 140,000 staff from EU countries can continue to work in the NHS
- enable more care to be delivered closer to home by building and upgrading primary care facilities, mental health clinics and hospitals
- increase the Immigration Health Surcharge to £600 for migrant workers and £450 for international students
- implement the recommendations of the Accelerated Access Review to make sure that patients get new drugs and treatments faster while the NHS gets better value for money and remains at the forefront of innovation
- retain the 95 per cent Accident & Emergency target, and the 18 week elective care standards, so that those needing care receive it in a timely fashion
- review the NHS' own internal market and, in time for the start of the 2018 financial year, make non-legislative changes to remove barriers to the integration of care
- extend the scope of the Care Quality Commission to cover the health-related services commissioned by local authorities
- legislate for an independent healthcare safety investigations body in the NHS
- recruit up to 10,000 more mental health professionals and require medical staff to have a deeper understanding of mental health

## 12.2 Housing

- deliver on the reforms proposed in the Housing White Paper to free up more land for new homes in the right places, speed up build-out by encouraging modern methods of construction and give Councils powers to intervene where developers do not act on their planning permissions
- enter into new Council Housing Deals with ambitious, pro-development local authorities to help them build more social housing
- reform Compulsory Purchase Orders to make them easier and less expensive for Councils to use and to make it easier to determine the true market value of sites
- give housing associations greater flexibility to increase their housing stock, building on their considerable track record in recent years
- reform and modernise the home-buying process so that it is more efficient and less costly

## 12.3 Children and families

- introduce, in 2017, thirty hours of free childcare for three and four year olds for working parents who find it difficult to manage the costs of childcare
- institute a capital fund to help primary schools to develop nurseries where they do not currently have the facilities to provide one

- publish a Green paper on young people’s mental health before the end of this year
- ensure that Councils provide consistency of care and cannot relocate vulnerable children far from their home when it is not in their best interests to do so
- demand all local authorities be commissioners of the highest quality family support and child protection services, removing these responsibilities from the weakest Councils and placing them in trust

## Prosperity and security in a digital age

13. Responding to the opportunities, challenges and threats of the digital age, the manifesto commits to assure the British people of security and fairness and strengthen the UK’s position as one of the world’s leading digital economies. Key commitments under this theme are as follows:

- develop a digital charter, working with industry and charities to establish a new framework that balances freedom with protection for users and offers opportunities alongside obligations for businesses and platforms
- publish operational performance data of all public-facing services for open comparison as a matter of course – helping people to hold their local services to account or choose other better services if they prefer
- set out a strategy to rationalise the use of personal data within Government, so that the wider public services comply with the ‘once-only’ principle by 2025
- support new providers seeking to use digital technology to monitor long-term conditions better, deploy carers to patients or support domiciliary care away from hospitals

## **The Conservative- Democratic Unionist Agreement**

14. Following the General Election, the Conservatives emerged as the party with the largest number of seats. Unable to meet the threshold of 326 seats (required to form a Government outright) the Conservatives approached the DUP in an effort to form a governing majority. As part of the agreement, that facilitated the deal, the DUP will support the Conservatives in Parliament in an arrangement commonly known as ‘confidence and supply’.

15. A confidence and supply agreement is one whereby a party or independent members of parliament will support the Government in motions of confidence and appropriation or budget (supply) votes, either by voting in favour or abstaining. However parties and independent members normally retain the right to otherwise vote in favour of their own policies or on conscience on legislative bills.

16. The main elements of the above-mentioned agreement, which were revealed on 26 June 2017 are as set out under the sub headers below.

## confidence and supply agreement in the UK Parliament

17. The DUP agrees to support the Government on all motions of confidence; and on the Queen's Speech; the Budget; finance bills; money bills, supply and appropriation legislation and estimates.
18. In line with the parties' shared priorities for negotiating a successful exit from the European Union and protecting the country in the light of recent terrorist attacks, the DUP also agrees to support the Government on legislation pertaining to the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union; and legislation pertaining to national security. Support on other matters will be agreed on a case by case basis.
19. The DUP agrees to support the Government in votes in the UK Parliament, in line with this agreement.

## policy agreement

20. Both parties have agreed that there will be no change to the Pensions Triple Lock and the universal nature of the Winter Fuel Payment. The parties agree to meet the NATO commitment of spending 2% of GDP on the armed forces. Both parties are committed to the Armed Forces Covenant and to its implementation throughout the United Kingdom.
21. Both parties agree to work together to consider options to support the highly successful reserve forces in Northern Ireland. The parties recognise the importance of the agriculture sector to Northern Ireland and the opportunities for growth that exist. Agriculture will be a critical policy area during the EU exit negotiations.
22. The parties agree to continue to commit the same cash total in funds for farm support until the end of the Parliament. Further discussions will take place on the future framework for farming support.

## financial support

23. The UK government will allocate £200 million per year for 2 years and with sufficient flexibility as to the choice of project to ensure the Executive is able to deliver the York Street Interchange (infrastructure) Project and other priorities.
24. The UK government will contribute £75 million per year for 2 years to help provide ultra-fast broadband for Northern Ireland. In order to target pockets of severe deprivation, the UK government will provide £20 million per year for 5 years to support the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver this measure.
25. The UK government will, allocate an additional £50 million per year for 2 years to enable the Executive to address immediate pressure in health and education. The UK government will allocate £100 million per year for 2 years to support the Northern Ireland Executive's delivery of its priority of health service

transformation. The UK government will provide £10 million per year for 5 years to support the Northern Ireland Executive for mental health.

## The Queen's Speech 2017

26. The Queen's Speech, which sets out the Government's legislative programme for the Parliamentary session, was delivered on 21 June 2017. A briefing paper circulated by the Cabinet Office set out that: *this Queen's Speech is about recognising and grasping the opportunities that lie ahead for the United Kingdom as we leave the European Union:*

- *delivering a Brexit deal that works for all parts of the United Kingdom;*
- *building a stronger, fairer country by strengthening our economy, tackling injustice and promoting opportunity and aspiration.*

27. In total the Government is proposing to bring forward 27 Bills in this Parliament. A number of these (eight in total) focus specifically on Brexit. Notable Bills in the Queen's Speech are as follows:

- **Repeal Bill** - this Bill will allow for a smooth and orderly transition as the UK leaves the EU, ensuring that, wherever practical, the same rules and laws apply after exit and therefore maximising certainty for individuals and businesses.
- **Customs Bill** - the Bill will ensure that the UK has a standalone UK customs regime on exit; provides flexibility to accommodate future trade agreements with the EU and others and ensures that changes can be made to the UK's VAT and excise regimes to ensure that the UK has standalone regimes on EU-exit.
- **Trade Bill** - the Bill will cement the United Kingdom's status as a leading trading nation, driving positive global change through trade, whilst ensuring UK businesses are protected from unfair trading practices.
- **Immigration Bill** - With the repeal of the European Communities Act, it will be necessary to establish new powers concerning the immigration status of EEA nationals. The Bill will allow the Government to control the number of people coming here from Europe while still allowing us to attract the brightest and the best.

28. A summary of other key Bills introduced in the Queen's Speech are attached to this report as an Appendix A, whilst a summary of relevant non-legislative measures is set out at Appendix B.

## Brexit update

29. The following paragraphs summarise the legislative and policy and decision-making framework guiding Britain's exit from the European Union. These

summaries update the position, since the last briefing to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2017.

## The United Kingdom's Exit from and New Partnership with the European Union: White Paper

30. In February 2017, the Government published a White Paper which set out the Government's broader vision for Brexit going forward. The document achieved three things; firstly it underlined the Government's commitment to follow through with plans to withdraw from the EU and honour the outcome of the EU Referendum; secondly, it set out the first stage in the legislative process for EU withdrawal and finally, it set out the 12 key priorities for the UK's exit.

### European Union (notification of withdrawal) Act

31. The European Union (notification of withdrawal) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 31 January 2017 and sought to confer power on the Prime Minister to notify, under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the EU. The Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament on 16 March 2017.

### Article 50

32. Article 50 of the EU Treaty is a basic five-point plan of action, should any country wish to leave the European Union. Once Article 50 is activated a nation state is cut out of EU decision-making at the highest level and there will be no way back unless by unanimous consent from all other member states. Article 50 was triggered on 29 March 2017.

### Great Repeal Bill White Paper

33. Building on the formal triggering of Article 50 the day before, on 30 March 2017, the Great Repeal Bill White Paper was published. The Bill sets out the Government's proposals for ensuring a functioning statute book once the UK has left the EU. In simple terms, the Great Repeal Bill will convert the body of European legislation – into UK law at the moment the European Communities Act (the governing charter for EU law) is repealed.

### Formal negotiation

34. Formal Brexit negotiations commenced on the 19 June 2017. The initial focus of the discussions has been the rights of some 3 million EU nationals living in the UK and the 1 million UK citizens living in the EU. On 26 June, the Government published a policy paper, which sets out proposals for addressing this issue specifically. As part of this, the paper makes clear that EU citizens looking to remain in the UK can do so. The paper also confirms the creation of a new 'settled status' for EU citizens who arrive before a cut-off date, which is yet to be specified and will be agreed as part of the negotiations with the EU.

35. Under the proposals, applicants who already have five years' continuous residence in the UK will be immediately eligible for settled status. Those who arrived before the specified date but do not yet meet the five year threshold by exit day will be allowed to stay until they reach that milestone and can also secure settled status. EU citizens who are granted settled status will be treated like a comparable UK national, entitled to broadly the same rights and benefits.
36. A grace period of up to two years will be in place for all EU citizens, including those who arrive after the cut-off date, allowing them to regularise their status to remain in the country.
37. In terms of the UK's wider negotiating stance, a statement to Parliament by Brexit Secretary David Davis, after the Queen's Speech, underlined the Government's commitment to exit both the Single Market and the Customs Union. Although in the same statement, the Secretary of State made clear that leaving the Single Market does not mean losing access to the Single Market.

## **Legal implications**

38. At the time of writing, it is premature to be specific as to exact legal implications, save for noting that we will need to keep this under review. In any event, the obligations for us as a Local Authority pursuant to, for example, the provisions of the Equality Act, will continue.
39. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
40. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
41. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed above.
42. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The Mayor

must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

43. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance>

44. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- [The essential guide to the public sector equality duty](#)
- [Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making](#)
- [Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#)
- [Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities](#)
- [Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities](#)

45. The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice.

Further information and resources are available at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

## **Financial implications**

46. There are no direct financial implications in noting this report.

## **Crime and disorder implications**

47. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, as amended, places a duty upon Local Authorities to consider crime and disorder implications and in particular, “to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of

those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.” This statutory obligation is the same for the Authorities “responsible partners” too. The level of crime and its impact is influenced by the decisions and activities taken through the day-to-day functions of local bodies and organisations.

48. The Queen’s Speech outlined that new legislation will be brought forward to protect the victims of domestic violence and abuse. This may have implications for a range of statutory services when the detail is laid out.

<b>Information relied upon in the preparation of this report</b>	
1.	Forward Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and Prosperous Future; The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto, May 2017
2.	Standing Strong for Northern Ireland: the DUP Manifesto for the 2017 Westminster Election
3.	The United Kingdom’s Exit from and Partnership with the European Union, March 2017
4.	The Great Repeal Bill White Paper, UK Parliament, March 2017
5.	The Queen’s Speech and Associated Background Briefing, on the Occasion of the Opening of Parliament, June 2017
6.	Conservative-DUP Agreement, June 2017
7.	Safeguarding the position of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU, June 2017

## **Appendix A: Queen's Speech - Key Bills**

### **Repeal Bill**

This Bill will allow for a smooth and orderly transition as the UK leaves the EU, ensuring that, wherever practical, the same rules and laws apply after exit and therefore maximising certainty for individuals and businesses.

### **Customs Bill**

The Bill will ensure that the UK has a standalone UK customs regime on exit; provides flexibility to accommodate future trade agreements with the EU and others and ensures that changes can be made to the UK's VAT and excise regimes to ensure that the UK has standalone regimes on EU-exit.

### **Trade Bill**

The Bill will cement the United Kingdom's status as a leading trading nation, driving positive global change through trade, whilst ensuring UK businesses are protected from unfair trading practices.

### **Immigration Bill**

With the repeal of the European Communities Act, it will be necessary to establish new powers concerning the immigration status of EEA nationals. The Bill will allow the Government to control the number of people coming here from Europe while still allowing us to attract the brightest and the best.

### **Smart Meter Bill**

In order to help deliver more transparent energy bills and allow households to monitor their use effectively.

### **National Insurance Contributions Bill**

The Bill will legislate for National Insurance contributions (NICs) changes announced at previous fiscal events (Budget 2016 and Autumn Statement 2016).

### **Courts Bill**

The Bill will reform the courts system in England and Wales to ensure it is more efficient and accessible, and in doing so utilise more modern technology.

### **Draft Tenants' Fees Bill**

Tackling unfair fees on tenants will make the private rental market more affordable and competitive.

### **Draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill**

In line with the manifesto commitment, draft proposals will be published to update the law to help tackle the evil of domestic abuse and violence. Proposals will be published in draft for scrutiny by MPs and peers to help build a consensus and raise the profile of this issue.

**Civil Liability Bill**

This Bill will crack down on fraudulent whiplash claims and is expected to reduce motor insurance premiums by about £35 per year.

**Financial Guidance and Claims Bill**

The Bill will combine three financial advice bodies into one, ensuring that people across the UK are able to seek the help and advice they need to manage their finances.

**Goods Mortgage Bill**

The Bill will implement recommendations from the Law Commission to update Victorian era law on logbook loans.

**Data Protection Bill**

The Bill will fulfil a manifesto commitment to ensure the UK has a data protection regime that is fit for the 21st century.

**Draft Patient Safety Bill**

The draft Bill will set out a framework to help improve patient safety in the NHS and instil greater public confidence in the provision of healthcare services in England.

## **Appendix B: Queen's Speech - Non legislative measures**

### **Counter Terrorism Review**

This review of counter-terrorism legislation is part of a broader review of our whole approach to counter-terrorism. Urgent work is already underway which will ensure that Government is doing everything possible to address the threat from terrorism and keep the public safe, drawing on lessons from the recent attacks in London and Manchester.

### **Commission for Countering Extremism**

This Government is committed to identifying and stamping out extremism across society, promoting pluralistic British values and reducing tolerance of extremism. To support this we will be establishing a statutory Commission for Countering Extremism that will play a key role in supporting communities and the public sector to identify and confront extremism wherever it exists.

### **Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower Fire**

On 15 June 2017, the Prime Minister announced a full public inquiry would take place to look into the circumstances behind the tragic fire which broke out in Grenfell Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

### **Independent Public Advocate**

The purpose of the Independent Public Advocate is to keep the bereaved and surviving victims of disasters informed of progress in any relevant investigation and make them fully aware how they can contribute to that investigation. The Public Advocate will be able to access information held by public bodies and will, where appropriate, report on or share that information with representatives of the victims.

### **Mental Health Reform**

The Mental Health Act 1983 sets out the legal framework in England and Wales for the treatment and detention of people with mental ill health, including when such action may be compulsory. The Act has not been fully updated for 34 years, although the Mental Health Act 2007 made changes. The Government will now begin to consider what further reform of mental health legislation is necessary, including changes in how the Act is implemented on the ground.

### **Social Care**

The Government will work to address the challenges of social care for our ageing population, bringing forward proposals for consultation to build widespread support.

### **Digital Charter**

The Government will develop a Digital Charter that will create a new framework which balances users' and businesses' freedom and security online. The Charter will have two core objectives: making the UK the best place to start and run a digital business and the safest place in the world to be online.

### **Public Finances**

The Government will reflect on the message voters sent at the General Election – while always remembering that we have to balance the books and eliminate the

deficit we inherited following the financial crisis. This is to ensure that future generations do not pay when we fail to live within our means. The Government values the important work that public sector workers do in delivering essential public services. We can only have well-funded public services and high standards of living if we deliver a stronger economy and increase our productivity.

### **Schools and Technical Education**

The Government will continue to encourage more people, schools and institutions with something to offer to come forward and help deliver more good school places. To continue the growth of good or outstanding school places, we have made available to academies and maintained schools a £140 million Strategic School Improvement Fund. We will continue to convert failing maintained schools into academies so that they can benefit from the support of a strong sponsor, and we are focused on building capacity across the system to enable this, including through growing new multi academy trusts.

### **National Living Wage**

We want to make sure employment rules and rights keep up to date to reflect new ways of working, and that is why in October we asked Matthew Taylor to conduct an independent review into modern employment practices. The Matthew Taylor Review of Employment Practices is an important step towards us ensuring fairness for everyone in work and we look forward to receiving the report shortly.

### **Tackling the Gender Pay Gap and Discrimination**

The Government will make further progress to tackle the gender pay gap and discrimination against people on the basis of their race, faith, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

### **Housing**

The Government will deliver the reforms proposed in the White Paper to increase transparency around the control of land, to “free up more land for new homes in the right places, speed up build-out by encouraging modern methods of construction and diversify who builds homes in the country. The Government will consult and look to take action to promote transparency and fairness for leaseholders. We will look at the sale of leasehold houses and onerous ground rents, working with property developers, the Competition and Markets Authority and others as outlined in the Housing White Paper.

### **Consumer Markets, including the Energy Market**

The Government will publish a green paper that will closely examine markets which are not working fairly for consumers, and is prepared to act where necessary.