



# Changes of Political Leadership Golden Triangle Event

Welcome and thank you for attending

12 March 2026

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# Welcome and Introductions

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Senior Improvement Adviser, LGA

# Introductions via Slido...

# Objectives of today

- Hearing from peers on preparing, scenario planning, and responding to a change of political leadership.
- Focusing on the leadership, cultural and governance aspect of preparing for changes in political leadership.
- Considering the responsibilities of Statutory Officers and collectively as Golden Triangle teams.
- What can we learn about smooth transitions – a chance to share practice with other Golden Triangle officers across other councils.



# Guest speaker

Denise McGuckin

Chief Executive, Hartlepool Borough Council

12 March 2026

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**Hartlepool**  
Borough Council

**CHANGES OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**  
**Guidance for Senior Managers**

Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
12<sup>th</sup> March 2026

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# STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL CHANGE PREPAREDNESS

## Impact on Strategic Direction

Political changes influence organisational priorities, shifts strategy, resources and expectations

## Leadership and Operational Adaptation

New leadership styles affect decision-making, scrutiny, and officer-member interactions, demanding operational flexibility. Managers must translate shifts into operational plans

## Mitigating Anxiety Through Preparedness

Proactive communication and continuity planning reduces employee anxiety and maintains stability.

## Ensuring Corporate Resilience

Robust governance and clear communication channels protect ongoing operations and maintain neutrality.



# CORE PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANISATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

## **Professional Impartiality**

Maintaining neutrality ensures trust with incoming leaders and supports operational continuity during political changes.

## **Strong Corporate Memory**

Accurate historical data and policy records help new administrations understand context and make informed decisions.

## **Risk Registers and Forward Planning**

Updated risk assessments and scenario planning prepare organisations for policy impacts and vulnerable services.

## **Clear Internal Communication**

Effective communication ensures staff understand expected behaviors and operational continuity through transitions.



# APPROACHES TO SCENARIO PLANNING

## **Developing Political Scenarios**

Create plausible scenarios to anticipate political changes.

## **Impact Assessment on Services**

Assess potential impacts on social care, environmental services, investment programmes, and community safety under each scenario.

## **Preparing Briefing Packs**

Prepare comprehensive briefing packs with statutory obligations, project timelines, budgets, and performance metrics in advance.



# MANAGING THE FIRST 24–72 HOURS AFTER CHANGE

## **Providing Clear Information**

Senior managers must supply accurate and timely information about statutory obligations, finances, and commitments to new leaders.

## **Effective Communication Protocols**

Clear communication prevents uncertainty and service disruption during the political transition period.

## **Orientation and Induction**

Providing high-quality induction materials, early briefings with clear protocols to help new councillors understand governance and operational risks quickly.



# GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

## **Adapting Governance Structures**

Political shifts demand rapid updates to governance frameworks, decision pathways, and delegated authorities to ensure smooth transitions.

## **Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities**

Clear member-officer boundaries and expectations help new councillors understand professional conduct and influence limits.

## **Supporting Portfolio Holders**

Managers prepare concise portfolios detailing priorities, risks, and initiatives to aid leadership effectiveness early on.

## **Ensuring Continuity in Decisions**

Critical projects and legal processes must continue seamlessly despite political transitions to maintain organisational stability.



# COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

## **Internal Staff Communication**

Senior managers provide timely updates to staff to clarify expectations and reassure during political transitions.

## **External Partner Communication**

Transparent messaging to external partners protects strategic relationships and reduces anxiety during change.

## **Coordinated Communication Protocol**

Temporary protocols ensure consistent messages through press statements, spokespeople, and media responses.

## **Proactive Engagement**

Early meetings help understand new leaders' priorities, working styles, and expectations, fostering trust and alignment.

## **Tailored Induction Support**

Provide induction to new leaders on governance structures and statutory frameworks to build confidence and effectiveness.



# MANAGING RISKS AND MITIGATIONS DURING TRANSITION

## Identifying Risk and Risk Mitigation

Managers must recognise operational, strategic, and reputational risks during political transitions to ensure service continuity.

Planning alternative scenarios and providing evidence can mitigate risks linked to policy changes and project delays.

Senior managers should assess risk registers to identify areas impacted by new political priorities for timely adjustments.

## Update Induction Materials

Refresh induction documents to provide clear, updated information on portfolios, responsibilities, and ongoing projects.

## Capacity Planning

Plan for short-term support and resource reallocation to manage increased briefing needs and rapid policy development.

## Ensure Continuity and Communication

Maintain essential statutory functions and establish regular communication with new administration for smooth transitions.



# LONG-TERM ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTATION

## **Strategic Alignment**

Senior managers must align corporate plans and financial strategies with the new administration's priorities to ensure organisational coherence.

## **Policy Monitoring and Integration**

Monitoring national and local policy trends enables integration of emerging insights into corporate planning for long-term resilience.

## **Performance Monitoring and Reporting**

Regular performance tracking and clear reporting frameworks support informed decision-making and effective organisational oversight.

## **Culture and Staff Support**

Reinforcing values, providing training, and engaging staff fosters adaptability, morale, and productivity during change.



# Breakout group

## Possible scenarios

# Instructions (20 mins)

- Introduce yourself and share political make up / history of your council
- Possible future scenarios / changes
- Feedback key themes into the chat



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## Guest speakers

Naomi Lucas, Principal Adviser - Finance & Governance, Local Government Association

Helen Bradley, Director of Legal & Democratic Services, Durham County Council

Naomi Lucas  
Principal Adviser - Finance & Governance,  
Local Government Association

# The CFO perspective

- Golden Triangle – plan with your CEX and MO
  - Scenario planning
  - Financial planning
- Build relationships across political parties pre-election
- Build understanding of current financial position across parties pre-election
- Prepare training and induction materials – LGA can support!
- Know your financial regs/constitution incl. delegated powers



Helen Bradley  
Director of Legal & Democratic Services,  
Durham County Council

12 March 2026

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**Changes in Political Leadership**  
**Helen Bradley, Director of Legal & Democratic Services**  
**Durham County Council**

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Thursday 12 March 2026



# Preparing the Council

## **Review of forward plans**

- What decisions need to be taken in 6 months before the election?
- What decisions need to be taken in 6 months after the election?
- Identify time critical decisions, which require briefings and prepare them in advance.
- Can any decisions be delayed?

# Preparing the Council

## **Review existing programmes/projects**

- Politically sensitive issues, subject to opposition, featured in election campaigns
- National Party policy positions
- What happens if there is a change of policy direction?
  - How would you review?
  - Timeframe
  - Impact on budget/policy framework
  - Process for decision making

# Preparing the Council

## **Review Governance Arrangements**

- Constitution
  - scheme of delegation up to date
  - How are delegations from meetings of the authority captured/recorded?
  - How are groups/administration/opposition referred to?
  - Chief Officer arrangements
- Briefing arrangements for Cabinet, Group Leaders, Opposition, all Members
- Member Officer Relations Protocol & Member Code of Conduct
- Political balance spreadsheet
- Date of Annual Meeting
- Calendar of meetings

# Preparing Officers

- Understand experience of political change
- Awareness of key milestones – election outcome, next steps, Annual meeting etc.
- Importance of political neutrality
- Use of language – consistent approach to addressing Cllrs.
- What information can/cannot be shared
- Readiness to explain previous decision making

# Preparing to support Members

## **Overview of the Council**

- Key Officers & Stakeholders
- Financial position
- Current risks & strategies for mitigating
- Time sensitive decisions

## **Member Induction Programme**

- Content appropriate for new members
- Bespoke training requirements
- Public Sector Equality Duty

Top Tip – Book a holiday!



# Breakout group and contributions

# Instructions (20 mins)

- What are you taking from the inputs today?
- What are you already doing that you are happy to share e.g. member development / constitution changes / culture
- Anything you are grappling with, any suggestions for further support?
- Feedback key themes into the main room chat when we are back from breakout groups



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# Final comments and feedback

Ami Beeton

Senior Improvement Adviser, LGA

# Resources

- [Support to officers facing a change in political leadership](#) (LGA)
- [Supporting transition to 'no overall control' – a 30-step framework](#) (LGA)
- [The 12 components of effective coalitions](#) (LGA)
- [Managing Political Transition to a New Administration guide](#) (Solace)
- [Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers](#)  
(jointly CIPFA, LLG and Solace)

# A call for peers

- To deliver our [sector-led improvement programme](#) we need your help. The LGA is committed to ensuring that our peers bring diverse and varied voices to support assurance and improvement across the sector. We welcome interest from all people working in a senior leadership role across local government, including chief executives, chief finance officers and monitoring officers.
- More information about the role of peers can be found at our [Become a Peer](#) pages, where you can fill in a short expression of interest form to receive more details, alternative email [peer.applications@local.gov.uk](mailto:peer.applications@local.gov.uk) and one of the team will be in touch.

# Feedback via Slido...



**Thank you for attending**

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