

# Briefing: 42

## Queen's Speech 2016

**new  
economy**®

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### Summary:

The Queen's Speech sets out the Conservative Government's programme for the next Parliamentary year. It was centred around the three themes of delivering security for working people, increasing life chances for the most disadvantaged and strengthening national security. A raft of new legislation was announced, including new measures to support devolution. This short briefing summarises the key bills of interest and relevance to GM, including in relation to local government finance, housing, planning and education. A full list of all 21 Bills announced can be found in the [background briefing notes on the Queen's Speech](#).

### Local Growth and Jobs Bill

This Bill will deliver on the Government's commitment to delivering 100% Business Rates retention for local authorities in England by the end of this Parliament. Local authorities will gain full control of the revenue they raise through business rates, with up to £13 billion being transferred to councils nationally, although this will also come with further (so far unspecified) responsibilities for spending. In addition, the Bill will strengthen local authorities' powers to cut business rates for local firms and give combined authority mayors the power to raise additional money for infrastructure where they have the support of local business. The Government's renewed commitment to Business Rate Retention is a positive step in the devolution journey and will ensure that GM local authorities are able to retain any growth in business rates income to invest in projects designed to secure further economic growth. The changes are being piloted in GM from April 2017 and the details are currently being developed.

### Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill

New legislation to reform the planning system and give local communities more power and control to shape housing and infrastructure in their area was announced. It will include measures to reform and speed up the planning process by minimising delays caused by pre-commencement planning conditions. In addition, there will be a new statutory basis for the independent National Infrastructure Commission. Also announced were plans to support neighbourhoods to come together to agree plans that will decide where things get built in their local area.

### Digital Economy Bill

This Bill includes new legislation to give every household a legal right to a fast broadband connection, which will help to ensure that more of GM's residents are able to benefit from improved digital infrastructure. GM's ambition is to become one of the world's top 20 digital cities by 2020. This new legislation builds on work led by GM partners to secure over £20million of UK Government and European funding to ensure that the provision of superfast broadband extends wider than would otherwise be achieved by the market without intervention. The Queen's Speech also announced new laws to help telecommunications providers build the infrastructure needed for faster broadband and better mobile networks and for consumers to be automatically compensated when things go wrong with their broadband service.

### **Bus Services Bill**

Elected mayors and local transport authorities will be given the power to improve bus services under a new Bus Services Bill. Bus franchising will enable the GM Combined Authority to take control of bus service planning with private operators contracted to run routes under a franchise agreement, creating an integrated network with a simple fares and ticketing system and consistent quality standard. The elected Mayor for Greater Manchester will have the ability to decide the routes, frequencies, timetables, fares and quality standards for bus services in the city-region.

### **Children and Social Work Bill**

New legislation to improve the outcomes of children in care were announced. The Bill will include changes to the considerations that courts must take into account in adoption decisions, tipping the balance in favour of permanent adoption where that is the right thing for the child, giving frontline services more freedom to work together to safeguard children and trial innovative approaches to deliver more effective care. In GM, this new legislation will build on the steps already being taken to improve outcomes for children in care through the review of children's services that is underway, a priority for GM's devolution agreement. In addition, a new system of regulating social workers was announced with a clear focus on driving improvement and introducing more demanding professional standards. A new 'Care Leavers Covenant' would also be set up to ensure local authorities set out clearly the entitlements for adults leaving care – including housing, jobs and healthcare – to support them in their adult life.

### **Education For All Bill**

This Bill confirms the Government's U-turn on forcing all schools to become academies. Whilst the Bill includes provision for all schools to become academies 'at some point in the future', the new Legislation will only see schools compelled to become academies a) where it is clear that the local authority can no longer viably support its remaining schools because too many schools have already become academies and b) where the local education authority consistently fails to meet a minimum performance threshold across its schools.

### **Higher Education and Research Bill**

Reforms to the higher education sector were also legislated for and are intended to give more people the opportunity to go to university as well as promote choice and competition across the sector. Measures were announced to make it easier for new high quality universities to open, intended to boost competition to improve teaching quality. The Government also plans to reform university funding to link funding for universities to the quality of teaching rather than student numbers, and graduate employment prospects will also be tracked so students can be sure they are getting value for money. New requirements on all universities to publish detailed information about application, offer and progression rates, broken down by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background will also be legislated for. This will highlight those universities that need to go further and faster on social mobility and spur further action to ensure all institutions reach out to disadvantaged groups.

### **Lifetime Savings Bill**

This Bill will provide the legislation needed for the Government's previously announced new savings schemes, which will help more of GM's young people and residents on low incomes to build up their savings. The Bill will apply to the new Help to Save scheme - where workers in receipt of working tax credits or Universal Credit who save up to £50 a month will receive a Government bonus of 50% - to a maximum of £600 – after two years. It will also apply to the new Lifetime ISA for young people, announced as part of the Budget, with a Government top up bonus of 25% on all savings up to £4,000 a year.

### **Prison and Courts Reform Bill**

Significant reforms to the prison system were confirmed, with the focus on 'ensuring prisons are not just a place of punishment but also rehabilitation'. The reforms include new powers for Prison Governors, a complete overhaul of education, health and training to reduce re-offending and give people the chance of a fresh start, and new performance measures to assess prisons' current performance, long-term direction and progress. The Government's move to give greater autonomy to prison governors is referenced within the "Criminal Justice" elements of the fourth Greater Manchester Devolution Deal, particularly in relation to

prison education. Greater Manchester will work with the Government, the Community Rehabilitation Company and local prison governors to link adult education and skills training provision in the community with education provision in prisons. The key recommendations within Dame Sally Coates' recent national review will shape the local discussions.

### **Policing and Crime Bill**

This Bill is the next phase in the Government's reform of the police. It includes a new duty on all three emergency services to collaborate, to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Chief officers will have new authority to designate wider powers on police staff and volunteers, so they can make the best use of their workforce. Greater Manchester Police is introducing a new 'Targeted Operating Model', and will take advantage of these powers in considering how best to roll out the Force's new Local Policing Model, following a successful pilot in Salford. It is anticipated that annual savings of £5.3m will be realised once the model is fully implemented. In addition there will be a stronger oversight role for PCCs over local complaints, giving them an explicit responsibility for ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of the local police complaints system, and extending HM Inspector of Constabulary's remit to enable it to inspect private contractors.